

A Collection of Essays and Articles

By Ali Humza

*To that young boy
Whose tongue remains locked.
And for those parents
Who fulfil their duty as best they can.*

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You may be in a rut, and that's a good thing - Let me explain.

You never meant to be like a machine - fatigue, burnout and stagnation are part of the journey towards greatness.

Many of us, in our self-improvement journeys, may experience stagnation, fatigue, burnout and stress. After long periods where we feel that we have pushed ourselves, we look back only to realise that no meaningful end result seems to have arisen. True, you may have noticed some development - but take an outsider perspective, and nothing seems to have changed.

Then comes the inevitable fallout - the realisation that the end result has not been worth the effort or time spent, followed by that familiar feeling of the meaninglessness of it all, and then the inevitable dropoff. It thus becomes difficult to recover from such burnout, and even if one does, this cycle of hard work, burnout and repetition may occur over and over again.

Yet, let us take another step back once more, and this time, let's not think in terms of weeks or months, but rather in terms of whole timelines - in the course of your life, how those 6 months, that 1 year, those 5 years, that decade, that whole period of your life. If we were to look out onto it, in the grand scale of things, the end result is not at all guaranteed. On the contrary, there is no knowing at which point, at which bout of hard work will that end result finally arise. And yet, what is it that separates great men from others?

The answer is (and we may not like it):
constant perseverance over a time span of decades, even a whole lifetime - without seeing the fruits of their labour - only to see the end result finally arise after endless struggle. In many cases, their success may not come until even after their passing.

O How Ironical! That man who spent years upon years on his quest - the history books will remember him for generations, for centuries, into the far, far future. And yet, in his whole lifetime, he was a loser nobody shunned by wider society as an obsessed maniac!

Yet, it surely is not all doom and gloom. This larger timescale will help us to realise how to contextualise our "ruts", so to speak, in light of this time frame.

The true nature of a rut:

In reality, a rut may just be an inevitable, necessary part of a man's journey to greatness. A man may lose sight of his goal, but it is about his return from the abyss of purposelessness that may truly matter.

With me vigour, new energy, and new focus, he now sets out upon his goal.

He doesn't care if he has to repeat this process over and over again.

For surely, he may stumble on his path from time to time, but surely, he will never then lose sight of the end goal.

Men throughout history have had to work infinitely hard, for long periods of time, for minimal results. Meaningful results only arise long after the work began.

People are fascinating - and you should be fascinated by them too.

Exploring the experiences and journey of the common man.

In our day and age, it is all too common to look down on the average person, as rather mediocre and unworthy of attention. We may view them with slight contempt even, as they are seen as not having achieved anything substantial. However, perhaps, this common perception of ours is too harsh, and may ignore the greater benefits of understanding such people's experiences, as part of the broader tapestry of the human condition.

Of course, my purpose here is not to belittle or downplay the importance of learning about heroic/great people. Indeed, stories of greatness, heroism and extraordinary feats attract and inspire people across the globe. Yet, my goal is simply to draw attention to the fact that the layman's experiences are not unworthy of attention. And neither should we necessarily view our lives as mediocre in comparison to those of great sportsmen, scholars, or historical figures.

To begin with, let's note a subtle, yet oft overlooked undertone that carries itself within the academic discourse - that being the belittling of the commoner. Often, we come across notions of "sheeps", "normies", "blind followers", etc. Or in other words - "They refuse to research and understand the intricacies and details of the world around them - those unfortunate ignorant fools". Oftentimes, those of us involved within academic discussions often fall prey to this kind of "ivory tower" or "saved people" syndrome, so to speak - that we are the elect, those who seek to understand the true nature of reality, whilst the rest are condemned to the darkness of ignorance and falsehood.

And yet, is this really true? Think about it - the average man actively experiences life, in society and with other people, in solitude and in their work, or whatever "journey", so to speak, they happen to find themselves in. Meanwhile, for the academic who retreated from the outer world to the safety of his books - can it really be said that he understands reality better than the commoner?

This brings us to a key point here - Experience. To live is fundamentally to experience. From the cradle to the grave. From a baby, to a child, to an adult, to old age. To experience fear, love, anger, sadness, happiness, jealousy, hatred, sorrow, grief, joy. To be delighted with one's friends and family, to accomplish and achieve, to go through the sorrows of heartbreak and loss. Surely, that's part of what it means to be human.

When one becomes so engrossed in books and research, one perhaps leaves out this key aspect of reaching the truth. To get stuck in irrational loops of thinking and justifying everything within a certain system is all too easy - difficult it becomes to have empathy and understand the experience of the common man.

In other words, "Experience teaches you what books can't". The commoner, through his experience, through his journey in life, through his relationships, may reach and understand

those truths, and fundamental facts, which a scholar, despite a lifetime of research, may not be unable to uncover.

This is not an attack on scholarship, or an attempt to promote “Anti-Intellectualism”. Rather, it is more so a plea, and a reminder to myself and others - in the course of our intellectual journeys and academic research, let us not lose sight of life, and the various experiences it has to offer.

Exploring the non-humanisation of people in Modernity.

"The apathy and indifference of people in the Western World to the suffering, torture, misery, bondage and death of millions and millions of people around the world in the years ahead may be one of the greatest tragedies of the twenty first century. "

Dr Carroll Quigley, Introduction to Tragedy and Hope.

When it comes to modernity, we find the almost strange, and utterly bizarre phenomenon, of the sheer lack of empathy towards other people. Towards their suffering, hardship, or otherwise. When a man's death is heard of in the news, not only is it merely treated with indifference (what is the value of human life, after all?), but alongside that, it is treated as the norm.

We may notice this sharp increase in lack of empathy, or in the rise of rage and anger externalised towards an "Other", so to speak, yet of importance in this article is how people may now be dehumanised, or rather, non-humanised, so to speak.

Dehumanisation or Non-Humanisation?

By now, academics and scholars have devoted countless pages to this topic, and the processes by which dehumanisation occurs. Othering narratives, coupled with desensitisation and normalisation in the media, serve to create a culture of indifference, and apathy. Yet I would like to suggest a second possible phenomenon, one that contains a subtle difference from the first type, but carries with it severe ramifications - that being non-humanisation.

What is the difference? You see, dehumanisation begins with a basic understanding (subconscious or implicit), of the humanity of the "Other". Of course, based on such an assumption, indifference to another person's suffering is unacceptable. Dehumanisation works by actively degrading the status of that person- treating them as barbaric, inferior, almost, if not entirely, sub-human. In such a case, one may not care about what happens to such a person. They may in fact deserve such a fate. Such processes were very common in pre-modernity, where the "Other", may, for example, be deemed as an infidel, deserving of God's wrath in this life and the next, hence deserving of a bad fate. As such, does it really matter what happens to him/her? (The example may be extended to other forms, such as class/race, and not exclusive to and perhaps, not always common in religious disputes only. Of course, religious teachings do not promote intolerance or dehumanisation per se, but extremists may use religious texts in such a manner).

However, in Modernity, an altogether different phenomenon occurs - that of active non-humanisation. This is due to a few reasons:

In Industrial societies, man is fundamentally separated from the natural, outside world, so to speak, by the artificial confines of an industrial modern society. This necessitates the separation of man from the fundamental reality of this world, and its cruel, darwinistic,

competitive aspects. Such being the case leads to man to not appreciating the very real suffering of his fellow humans that occurs, simply because he's not connected to what's out their

In Modern Industrial societies, we may view man as a simple cog in a machine, rather than an organic entity. His personality, his emotions, his relationships, aren't really considered.

The disconnect from tradition and religion removes us from the source of many of our institutions about the value of humans. With the nihilistic bent of many modern societies, belief in the value of life and humanity inherently collapses

Although slightly removed from the above topic, many modernist ideologies may share the view that human nature is mutable, coupled with the view that organically developed institutions or traditions/customs are oppressive. This leads to the view that the State may be able to socially engineer people, creating rather dystopian scenarios, so to speak.

This non-humanisation is perhaps more dangerous than dehumanisation, for it forgets, and even omits, the understanding of the value of all humans, inherently, due to their being human, and the inherent value of human life.

Yet, it does not have to be so.

“ If all our efforts resulted in saving just one life, wouldn't it be worth it? What if we could save 100 lives? What if we could save 1000 lives? What about 10,000 lives? What about 1,000,000 lives?”

(Tragedy and Hope, Dr. Carroll Quigley, 1966 edition, available online)

“ O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may ‘get to’ know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware.”
(Quran 49:13)

“Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness...’
(Bible - Genesis 1:26)

"What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving, how express and admirable..."
(Shakespeare, Hamlet)

To Will is To Do - exploring the Islamic narrative on Intention:

“ It is narrated on the authority of Amir al-Mu'minin (Leader of the Believers), Abu Hafs 'Umar bin al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), say

"Actions are according to intentions, and everyone will get what was intended. Whoever migrates with an intention for Allah and His messenger, the migration will be for the sake of Allah and his Messenger. And whoever migrates for worldly gain or to marry a woman, then his migration will be for the sake of whatever he migrated for."

Related by Bukhari & Muslim. “

This Prophetic Tradition informs us of the importance of Intending to act. Indeed, it perhaps has more importance than the action itself. As per other Prophetic reports, “The intention of the believer is better than his action.” So why this emphasis on Intention ?

The answer would seem to be - Indeed actions are preceded by the will to act them out, and such will arises from when one's heart, so to speak, gathers and firms itself to carry out a certain action, such that it overrides laziness and sloth not to perform an action. In other words, the will which carries a person to carry out a certain action is based upon a strong intent to do so. Hence, action is fundamentally derived from intention. The more one truly understands the benefit of an action, and keeps it in mind during his intention, the stronger his will is to act. Hence, the Muhammadan Insight (Peace and Blessings be upon him) here is the importance of the will to act, before the act itself, and the first step to a strong will is a firm intention - hence, actions are based upon intentions, precisely because the will to act is derived from the intention to do so.

Many Philosophers have discussed the will as a fundamental aspect of the Human condition - as the mechanism that carries humans forward to act. Who, for example, is not familiar with Schopenhauer's concept of the will, or Nietzsche's concept of the will to power? Who is not familiar with stories of seeking honour, greatness, virtue and justice? All of these derive from a strong will. But remember, a strong will is derived from the intention to bring about certain actions, by which those ends will be fulfilled. A strong intention not only brings about an action, but keeps in mind why an action is being carried out - in other words, the purpose behind the action, and the meaning of it thereof.

This also brings us to another important Muhammadan Insight (Peace and Blessings be Upon Him) - the condemnation of Blind Ritualism, for its own sake. The Quran asserts “ Righteousness is not in turning your faces towards the east or the west. Rather, the righteous are those who believe in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Books, and the prophets; who give charity out of their cherished wealth to relatives, orphans, the poor, ‘needy’ travellers, beggars, and for freeing captives; who establish prayer, pay alms-tax, and keep the pledges they make; and who are patient in times of suffering, adversity, and in ‘the heat of’ battle. It is they who are true ‘in faith’, and it is they who are mindful ‘of Allah’. (Quran 2:177) ” In other words, whilst actions are important, they are not the ends in and of themselves, but rather the means. The end goal should be virtue, and closeness to God, whilst pious acts are the means that facilitate that end goal.

Viewing the means as the end goal, of course, leads to issues, not only because one ends up losing sight of the purpose behind carrying out those means, it may end up producing the opposite reaction and end up causing abandonment of those means altogether. This can be

noticed in many modernist ideologies, where the means are confused with the end goals (such as maintaining/de facto worshiping the nation-state or trying to bring about a classless utopia). These may backfire spectacularly, and often have the opposite, unintended effect. The end goal of Jurisprudence, thus, is not so that the acts in themselves be considered as the end point of virtue, but rather, those mechanisms and processes will bring about virtue. Hence, the Islamic narrative dictates Intention must precede action, to foster true virtue and piety - as the Quran asserts "The do not ascribe purity to yourselves, he is more knowing as to who is more God-fearing (Quran 53:32)". This is so as not to confuse the end goal with the means, the rituals with piety or virtue.

"Your lord is most knowing of what is within yourselves. If you are righteous (in intention) - then indeed he is ever, to the returning (to him), forgiving." (Quran 17:25)

The worship of the Nation-State in Modernity via Nationalism

A few examples are pertinent -

WW1, where, in the lead up to it, nationalistic fervour and pride was at an all time high. The events of WW1, of course, shattered such notions and trust entirely

The Ultra Nationalism in the dissolution, civil war, and subsequent partition of Yugoslavia

The Modern-Day Indian Subcontinent, where Nationalism in both Pakistan and India, and the subsequent tensions arising thereof, is reminiscent of Europe during WW1

The nation-state is often viewed as an end in and of itself. Its preservation and maintenance is of utmost importance. But neither is it particularly a certified, immutable part of human society. Yes, Humans are tribalistic and territorial, but the idea of a Nation state with citizens in it that share a common culture, language and oftentimes race, is a totally modern invention. Yes, race and culture are very much real things, but the organisation of them as presented in this modern concept is rather novel, in the grand scale of human existence.

If we were to look at it from the outside, it seems that the nation-state is deemed almost as sacred. Insulting it is equivalent to insulting the people of that nation, a personal attack that necessitates denying their right to exist. Man is subservient to the laws of this state. In many, if not all cases, the industrial, and highly scientific and technological, nature of modern societies, allows for mass surveillance, and inspection into every part of man's life (as noted by Foucault in his concept of disciplinary and sovereign power). This is in control of pre-modern societies which didn't have the ability to carry out surveillance on such a scale. Alongside that, the bureaucratisation of society has led to increasingly stringent and complex legal procedures. All of this to say, that the nature of modern societies entails the total obedience and subservience of the common man to the nation-state.

Thus, the nation-state is almost an embodiment, indeed, a manifestation of the culture, ways, and customs of a people. A completely encompassing set of codes, or laws, dictating man and his life, so to speak.

When looked at from this perspective, it's easy to see why Nationalism may entail the worship of the nation-state, a characteristic of the organisation of society in the modern era unique from past eras.

Should Darwinism dictate Morality?

Should Darwinism dictate Morality?

<https://youtu.be/ZM8VHd801Yc?si=oGWF5i-29boMaSZi>

The theory of Darwinistic evolution is dominant within academia, and in our popular culture and understanding. Notions of this model permeate the way we view the world. Yet, do we always take these conceptions to their rational conclusion?

For example, we see that, in the field of ethics or morality, were one to employ a darwinistic framework, it would be sure to raise a few eyelids or get a few cold looks. Such a framework would undoubtedly lead to a cruel, animalistic, hyper-competitive, moral outlook. Such a worldview may lack empathy. Of course, such is not tolerable for the dominant paradigm, both sociologically and politically, under which we operate. Hence, efforts are taken to avoid such a moral outlook.

Take for example, Richard Dawkins work "The Selfish Gene". He does mention on page 2, "Philosophy and the subjects known as the 'humanities' are still taught almost as if Darwin had never lived". In other words, our understanding of the humanities should (albeit implied implicitly) reflect darwinistic teachings, so to speak. Yet he then goes on to say, "I am not advocating a morality based on evolution". There seems to be a subconscious realisation, on Dawkins part (to his credit), that our moral framework can't be informed by our understandings of evolution, for what is worth.

It's interesting to note that all parts of the political spectrum, have at one point or another, claimed to represent "the science". In our times, this may be seen by the new atheists in particular (who have a strong left-wing libertarian slant, although some amongst them have shifted to the right in recent years). Yet, it's quite clear that this has clear demarcated limits, which do not intersect with other disciplines, such as ethics, as the above example. It also perhaps demonstrates that there is a need for scientific facts, or natural sciences as a discipline, to operate under a deeper metaphysical and philosophical framework. It also raises the issue of how we are to demarcate these respective disciplines, in relation to their fields of study.

“The Path to hell is paved by good intentions” - Exploring Collective Insanity as a profoundly (stupid) Human endeavour

It's all too common, when we come across examples of societies which, as a collective whole, were excessively mad and repressive, to view them with a sense of astonishment, and disbelief. How on earth can humans, who are the most “rational” creatures on this earth, so to speak, fall into such ridiculous loops of irrationality and insanity so as to justify, outright, some of the most ridiculous phenomena anyone may have ever been afforded the chance to witness or record?

In this way, we may fail to understand, or appreciate, what in fact is really going on. You see, any society, and system of thought, and worldview, is developed through a fundamentally human endeavour. It requires great wit, great intellectual courage, and a good amount of initiative. Such developments occur over generations, experiencing constant developments and breakthroughs.

Some may attribute such developments to ill-intended, malicious folks. But is that really the case? Can we really demonise a whole group of people, those who, at the very least, seem to be developing a worldview, in order to seek the truth, can we really claim that they are attempting to subvert the truth? It's easy to claim that so and so is part of some grand conspiracy to subvert the truth or mislead man, yet much more difficult it is to acknowledge the very human, genuine aspect of such attempts.

It's not so fair to simply demonise other groups. Man has struggled to grasp the answers to life's greatest questions. As such, such schools of thought have developed, whether over thousands of years, centuries, decades, or even very recently, to answer such questions. The claim thus that they simply, and merely, sought to create such answers, which were so self-evidently and clearly false, yet sought to delude themselves, and by it mislead mankind, is a rather naive way of thinking, that fails to contextualise.

Yet, we can quite clearly deduce from certain aspects of said systems, particularly when they spiral into insanity and tyranny, that something has gone wrong. Despite good intentions, these do not necessitate that one always get the right answer. In fact, in spite of such a noble goal, such endeavours may backfire spectacularly. Such is it to be human - despite being the most rational creature, we often end up in ridiculous circumstances by attempting to use our rational faculties.

One work of fiction which demonstrates this perfectly is Attack on Titan. Technically, the characters are not wrong in what they say. We can contextualise why they believe in what they believe in. Yet, it is quite clear that the conclusions that they derive from certain historical facts, or real world experiences, are justifications for rather insane acts. Again, basing it and accounting in the context which they are situated in, yet understanding the all too human, all too emotional, and somewhat stupid reality of it all.

So I guess it's safe to say after all - "The Path to Hell is paved by good intentions".

Islam as acknowledging the complex nature of reality - “Both” as the answer

- Synthesise Philosophy/Metaphysics/Logic with Religious scripture - acknowledge pros/cons
- Acknowledge importance of custom and law
- Of spirit and text
- Synthesise different cultures/traditions with Islamic tradition
- Complicated human nature
- Man inherently good but not infallible, subject to angelic and animalistic natures
- Both material world and afterlife/spirit world should be given due importance
- Serve God through various actions (learning, work, leadership, family etc)
- Inevitably will synthesise certain aspects of modernity with Islamic tradition
- Take both worldly and spiritual means
- Fighting inevitable part of human history
- Do not transgress, deal kindly with those who are kind with you
- Some conflict necessary, must be willing to make sacrifices in the grand scale of things
- The hereafter is greater
- Some people of the book are just, have faith and are kind
- Others will not be pleased until you leave your faith - aren't your friends
- Balances realpolitik and idealism
- “Man is most thing Quarrelsome”
- “Corruption/Fitna is more severe than killing”
- “When it is said to them don't spread corruption in the land they say we are reformers”
- “Then they should laugh little and cry much, as recompense for what they acquired (from their acts)”

Muhammadan Insights into Silence, its importance and Use.

The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is reported as having said:

“The one who stays silent has attained salvation.”

عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال:

"من صمت نجا."

It has also been narrated from him (Peace be upon him):

“The one who believes in God or the Last day should speak good or remain silent”

و روي عنه عليه السلام أيضا

"من كان يؤمن بالله و اليوم الآخر فليقل خيرا أو ليصمت"

Staying silent is a skill - one that many may downplay, belittle, or altogether neglect and ignore. Yet silence is important, it carries very heavy implications (or it's lack thereof). One must not forget it as part of one's communication skills.

At the same time, let not one get carried away in his speech, in it's excessiveness or in using foul words, or engaging in useless speech. One should avoid that which carries not benefit to a person, but rather strive in what is worthwhile.

As per the words of the Prophet (Peace be upon him):

“From the goodness of a man's Islam (The Religion), is to leave that which does not concern him”.

"من حسن إسلام المرء أن يترك ما لا يعنيه"

Hence, instead of engaging in useless conversations, one should guard his tongue. This is a reminder to those who engage in hair-splitting minutiae, or in obscure topics, missing the forest for the trees. Investing time into seeking knowledge, and genuine scholarship, rather than engaging in pointless debates without knowledge, and wasting ones time in polemics, can also be derived from the above.

To be clear, this doesn't refer to discussions or debates done in good faith with genuine academic integrity by both sides, but rather it refers to bad faith polemics and argumentation.

Hence, avoid such arguments, and strive for that knowledge and wisdom which will truly benefit, and engage in those things, and speak about, what truly matters and is good.

“And God call to the abode of peace, and guides whom he wills to the straight path.”
(Quran).

cThe Cognizance Revolution

Yuval Noah Harari in his book Sapiens suggests this

70,000 years ago

Breakthrough in culture

Language became more supple

Able to convey complex ideas

Create foundational myths that allowed us to operate in large groups

Some have asserted the Adam/Eve story to be a kind of memory from this Cognizance Revolution

Some have said the forbidden fruit was a psychedelic

Not theologically sound per say, but still an interesting theory

Some may say the blowing of a soul into Adam signifies his becoming Cognizant

He gained Ma'rifah of God, so to speak

Granted knowledge of all things

When Politics and Cricket Collide

Pak Vs India

As part of the crisis of the 2020's decade, tensions between Pakistan and India have been rising

However, things reached a boiling point in 2025 when in the disputed province of Kashmir, a terrorist attack was carried out, now known as the Pahalgam terrorist attack (26 civilians tragically killed), India accused Pakistan of funding the militant groups involved

India responded with operation Sindoor, striking various targets across Pakistan

Pakistan accused India of hitting civilian targets

Pakistan and India then accused each other of missile strikes

Pakistan then launched operation Bunyan e Marsoos

After 4 days of conflict, A ceasefire was agreed upon based on intervention via US intervention

Tragic loss of life on both sides

What does that have to do with Cricket?

Sure, India and Pakistan were bitter rivals, but even in the backdrop of past conflicts, past matches had been played with mutual respect, at the very least

That was soon about to be thrown out of the window

During the first match between Pakistan and India, both captains refused to shake hands

After the match, Surya said on the press conference that "something's are more important than cricket", asserting that he stood with the victims of the Pahalgam terrorist attack and stood by the IAF in Operation Sindoor

Agha refused to attend the press conference, Mike Hesson turned up in his stead

This was in the backdrop of increasing political influence in both camps

Indian Head Coach ghambir had past ties with the BJP

Mohsin Naqvi, chairman of PCB and ACC, had ties to Pakistani government

2nd match in the Super 4, noticeable altercations

S.Farhan celebrated his 50 with a "Gun shot" celebration

H.Rauf made a 6-0 symbol - reference to PAF allegedly shooting down 6 indian jets

Made hand gesture of planes crashing when indian fans chanted Kohli's name, who had gotten the better of him to win the match back in the 2022 world cup

Players once again refused to shake hands

After disciplinary hearings, Yadav and Rauf were fined 30% of their match fees
Farhan let off with warning
The final - thriller
Pak 107-1 before India pulled it back to 146 all out
India would lose three early wickets
Thanks to a tilak varma masterclass and knocks by Dube, Samson and the finish by rinku
Last over finish
Admittedly, Pakistan could have won had it not been for some poor decisions on the field

Post Match ceremony:

Pakistani captain Salman Ali Agha was presented with the runners-up cheque of US \$75,000 by Aminul Islam of the Asian Cricket Council, he flung it to the ground almost instantly while still standing on the podium.

After India defeated Pakistan in the final, the presentation ceremony was delayed by more than an hour as the Indian team refused to accept the winners' trophy and medals from Asian Cricket Council (ACC) president Mohsin Naqvi—who is also Pakistan's Interior Minister and Chairman of the PCB—while Naqvi insisted on presenting them himself.[63] As a result of the impasse, India were not awarded the trophy and medals during the ceremony, and Naqvi reportedly left the stadium with the trophy.[64][65] Following this, Indian captain Suryakumar Yadav celebrated the Indian victory by hoisting an 'imaginary trophy' with his team. Later he criticised the handling of the ceremony and said his team had been "denied" the opportunity to lift the trophy.[66]

BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia described Naqvi's act of "taking away" the trophy and medals as "unsporting", and announced that the BCCI would protest his actions at the ICC conference in November.[67] On 1 October, three days after the final, Naqvi reiterated his refusal to give the trophy to India unless the team personally collected it from him at the ACC head office in Dubai.[68]

Ofc there was instant media backlash from both sides, both quick to condemn the other

Serves to show the rise of strong nationalistic tendencies in both camps

Akin to WW1 Europe

This Nationalism is seeping into all aspects of society, including sports

Heading towards another war?

The worship of the nation-state as the final end

Meanwhile, distracted from the very real social problems at home

Anger and frustration externalised through sports

Give the commoner bread and circuses

Instead of revolution and bringing about change, get angry at the tv/plays

Whilst the elites continue to take both countries down a treacherous path

For Pakistan, collapse and balkanisation

For India, almost dystopian like

The world may hope not to see two nationalistic militant states fall into conflict

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2025_Asia_Cup#Final

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2025_India%E2%80%93Pakistan_conflict#Ceasefire

A reflection on John Donne and The Complete English Poems

John Donne and his work is certainly interesting and captivating. His poems are rather thought provoking, reflecting many philosophical, and metaphysical themes and tropes. In particular. His discussions on love and on sacred devotion are rather intellectually enticing.

His poems on love and lust are rather striking, so to speak. Whilst being a man of faith, he certainly does not shy away from this topic. However, it would be important, I would argue, to understand his poems on love in the backdrop of his theological leanings.

Being engrossed by divine love:

In many of Donne's poems, he discusses, or rather hints towards, a state of complete and utterly perfect unity in love. To love, to be a lover, to be beloved, such are common themes that arise in his poems. And yet, perhaps we should read these passages in a more metaphorical, theological manner.

Oftentimes, one may use the allegory, or metaphor, of the complete and utter lover of the lover with his beloved, to describe and depict being completely engrossed in Divine Love, or in Love of the divine, so to speak. For example, who does not know of the famous Arabic tale of Majnun (In Arabic, referring to an insane or mad person) and Layla (Majnun's beloved). Many Sufi Sages and Scholars alike have used this allegory to describe one being completely engrossed in the love of God.

This also reflects the Sufi Concepts of Fana Fillah (Literally perishing in God - what this refers to is reaching such a state of divine remembrance that one can't see anything else other than God's real existence, and our utter dependence on him). Everything becomes a reflection and sign of the Divine.

The theme of Love in Christian theology is very heavily emphasised, of course, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Hence, it's very easy perhaps, to interpret Donne's poems on love in light of this theological backdrop, and hence to view it metaphorically as reaching a state of complete unity with Divine Love.

Of note is that Donne often includes themes and tropes from Ancient Greek philosophy and Christian theology, as is common with the learned men of this era. He also has a notable slant against the Church of Rome, and seems to reflect several Protestant tendencies as well.

The King who stands firm - A battle against two clans

(A Fictional Story)

Once, there reigned a king, his rule marked with justice and peace... A Great Monarch, one who spread prosperity to all corners of his kingdom. A man powerful and mighty, standing over a vast realm, yet merciful and gentle with his subjects, like a gentle breeze that graces all in its presence. A Just man, A Pious Figure, devoted in service to the Divine, and to his people. The great benefactor, the great authority, in charge of a vast domain...

Yet there remained... lands. Lands stretching far beyond. Lands beyond his domain, beyond his control... Lands shrouded in mystery, yet to be explored, yet to be traversed, beholding wonders beyond one's wildest imagination.

And so, the king, with his entourage, set out upon a quest to traverse these undiscovered lands. Some whisper of a God-Given duty, others whisper of conquest, others accompanying him, in search of honour and glory in exploration. Soon, they witness things, beyond their usual comprehension - tribes speaking in various tongues, indiscernible to them. A Murky Spring, where it seemed that the sun set in. Mountains, Jungles, waterfalls - Beasts and creatures, as of yet unknown to even the most knowledgeable amongst them.

This grand journey, one sealed in fate pre-eternal, took the king to territories hitherto alien to him and his entourage, a sign of the grandeur which the creator had bestowed upon this world, leading him to a fateful encounter...

A regular mountain range, it seemed like, one covered in snow and ice... A Narrow path splitting right through it, a passage for those brave explorers, seeking to pass through it. Yet when the King, with his men, descended into the valley, he was met with an unimaginable sight...

The stench of death hung high in the air; corpses of dead soldiers, upon dead soldiers, stretching till the horizon. As he approached the lifeless bodies, each and every one of them had the same look - of sheer horror, of sheer dread. Their will to fight, it seems being sapped out of their bodies along with their souls, and the life which they embodied.

"Sire", said one of his soldiers, " we found these people hiding in the caves away from here".

"Ask them - what on earth happened here?"

"That's the thing, your majesty," replied the soldier, "we can't understand what they are trying to say".

The king summoned his interpreters, yet they remained just as bamboozled at their foreign means of expression, as did the rest of his entourage. The individuals in question looked terrified, constantly looking over their shoulder, like prey anticipating the moment their

hunters may strike - their eyes filled with dread, almost as if at an inevitable threat, which they can not, and could not, avert...

The King, with his entourage, went back to the cave from where these people were discovered - there, yet more survivors, some weeping, some silent, as if frozen by fear, others comforting the others, seeking some hope and optimism in an otherwise horrific situation. There, they took the king, with a few of his guards and interpreters, to their wise men - after much deliberation, they were finally able to interpret their alien tongue, and thus began the retelling of a tale, one of monstrosities beyond what could have possibly been imagined.

Long ago, recalled these sages, the people of the mountains once lived in peace. They traded, shared wisdom and stories, abiding in peace and harmony, at one with their creator and nature. A confederation of 10 tribes, which considered the mountains their home. And then, they came...

A distant people, consisting of two clans, unbeknownst to them, just as they were to the king and his entourage. The King of the mountains, so the labelled him, of that time, alongside his army, consisting of the men of eight of the tribes, met them at the river to the north. The subsequent slaughter that occurred, claimed the lives of not just the king, but every last man from the army. None were spared.

These two barbaric tribes had wrecked havoc upon these lands, destroying everything in their path... Legend says that they would take some of the dead from the opposing armies and feast upon them, in an act of ritualistic cannibalism... Their God, to which they sacrificed to, was said to be one of death and destruction. They tortured, stole, pillaged, assaulted - almost like a predator that likes to play with its prey before devouring it. Nobody, and nothing, was safe from their grasp, their sheer and utter tyranny, their encompassing wrath.

At that, the oldest of their wise men began weeping profusely, tears spilling down in droves from his reddish eyes. They were the last of the 10 tribes left, he proclaimed, and even they had been whittled down to a tenth of their original number. He kneeled before the king, and begged him - begged him to deliver them from the constant horror that they faced. In return, they promised anything and everything that he wanted - they were at his service, for whatsoever he desired.

The king then knelt beside the man - he raised up his chin, and looked him in the eyes. "Do not think that I desire this-worldly possessions", he proclaimed, "Indeed, what my lord had granted me is more sufficient than whatever you may give to me". He then embraced the man, comforted him, and assured him that with all of what he had, he would put a stop to this menace, once and for all.

"Grant me your manpower, and bring me molten iron", he ordered, "We shall ensure their tyranny will no longer encompass these lands".

The sound of marching hooves, the blowing of a horn, and the triumphant cries of a band, which knows that none in this realm can defeat them. They speed on through this passage, their sheer numbers and individual might being the terror which keeps awake the heavens and the earth, the stars in the sky being just a side-show to them. They seek their prey once again, those weaklings that deserve to be hunted down and devoured by the strong, the worthy, like them...

Suddenly, the screeching of hooves as the march comes to a standstill.

"What's that", says one of them.

As a group of them steps closer, they realise...

"Is that?..."

"A Wall?"

"That was not here yesterday!"

One of them raises their hand, seeking to touch it - as soon as his fingertips grace it, he instantly jolts it back... hot, yes, very hot indeed. Yet firm, and sturdy, not something that can easily be broken or destroyed.

Some movement in the back, some shuffling in the lines, and out comes the leader of these two warrior tribes, which until now, had not been halted in their conquests, and yet, as of now...

"So, what is it?"

"It is a wall, sire."

"Yes, I could tell that much... The real question is, can we destroy it, or not?"

With the signal of his hand, out steps two men, one with a sledgehammer, another with a piece of rope.

"Yes Sire!"

"Strike it!" He said slowly, yet emphatically.

With the strike of the sledgehammer, and the crunch of metal, the men were shocked at the sight of the sledgehammer being shattered into a dozen pieces. The leader looked on in anger; what was this thing, this giant monstrous wall that brought their march to a halt.

How could this have been erected in one night? Could it be... No, it could not have been the tribe. Even if they had the manpower to do so (which they didn't), they were primitive people-how could they have figured out how to erect such a structure? He felt a nagging feeling, but what was it...

“Lieutenant, was there anybody else with the tribe when we last defeated them?”

“No sire”

“This can't be that tribe's doing, someone else must be conspiring against us”.

At that, gasps arose from the crowd, their frustration at being stopped in their tracks coupled with anger at whoever had built up this wall - whoever had done this, deserved to be taught a lesson, one they wouldn't forget for eternity.

“Lieutenant, bring our climber unit here - tell them to scale this wall.”

And so it was, and yet again, they could not penetrate the wall - it had been sloped at the top, to prevent any rope from latching on. As such he saw man after man attempt to scale it, only for them to fall, with a resounding thud.

The leader's face stiffened, his jaw tightening, hands shaking - the visible signs of frustration and anger on his face cautioning his soldiers not to approach him.

He thought back to their past conquests - some silly island peoples who thought they could match them, men and women who thought their towering walls could protect them, warriors who thought they were worthy of challenging them - in every single instance, none could defeat their might, their brute strength and sheer numbers. They were invincible. And yet... a mere wall. The thought of some puny structure holding them back filled him with sheer rage.

“This darn WALL!”, he exclaimed, as he punched it with sheer wrath. His men flinched backwards in unison, sensing the frustration build up in their leader. They had never seen him so uncomposed, so uncollected before.

And yet... his Lieutenant felt the same nagging feeling that the others felt - what was it, or rather, who was it that could materialise such a barrier, such a barrier that was now impossible for them to breach, they who were the conquerors of the heavens and the earth...

The sound of a horn, a battle cry, and the beating of the drums broke the string of these thoughts - the men were shocked to see men pile on from the mountains, caught off guard - they assumed formations, hastily and in a disorganised manner, waiting to be struck.

Then, the opposing army simply shot their arrows, and retreated back up the hill. The men in the passage were only beginning to acknowledge what had just happened, when once again a second battalion descended, shot their arrows, and retreated back up the hill. (Ongoing...)

He who explored the ends of the Earth:

Long ago, in an era unbeknownst to the books of history, there once was a man - a Pious ruler, just compassionate and gentle in his dealings, yet firm, strong and mighty in his authority. Established in the land; in whose hands resided the edges of the Earth. The Conqueror, the Rule, that great Benefactor, whose story would, for later generations, be shrouded in mystery and legend.

Wealth, Men, Resources - all were at his disposal. His navy ruled the waves, his army master of the lands; he had conquered all one could ask for from life. Some whispered of this as a sign of Divine Grace, at his piety and uprightness, others whispered of the Universe having bestowed upon him the fruits of his labour during his reign. Yet beyond all else, he still desired for more...

True, he had all he wished for in life, yet his heart, his soul, his conscience yearned for more... He knew, he felt, he understood, that he had been put on this Earth, by his lord, as part of a Divine plan, sealed in that primordial, pre-eternal thing known as fate. His destiny was in his grasp, his calling to a greater legacy, like Noah's ark, where he must embark upon...

And so, gathering his forces, alongside his most trusted men, he said his goodbyes - kissing his loved ones, hugging his friends, and receiving a glorious farewell by his subjects, those who adored him with all their hearts, beating in unison, in love for the man who had brought so much prosperity to them.

At last, he finally sets out; this king, beloved to all, on a journey - a journey that shall take him to the ends of the Earth, where he shall encounter all that, which was until now, unbeknownst to him...

And so begins his quest, to explore and discover as of yet unknown lands. He traverses the various territories of this earth, far and beyond his realm, yet spectacular in the wonders they behold to the eye. Lands filled with snow, as far as one can see till the horizon... Islands of Ice, towering over man, casting his shadow over him, one that cannot be erased... Deserts of sand, lakes of a fiery red substance, Jungles holding creatures until now unbeknownst to even the entourage's most knowledgeable, a sign of the might of the Divine and the grace with which he has blessed this universe, a microcosm for the grandeur of this universe, this temporal reality, and all the beauty that is has been blessed with, like one long, elegant eyelash, from the face of a lover...

And so, the king, his heart bearing witness to these signs of Divine Providence, set before his eyes, continues his march, on and forward, towards a fateful encounter, that shall change history, and redefine the world itself, forever...

End Of Story

This story was inspired by the tale of a traveller king in Islamic Lore, commonly known as Dhul-Qarnayn.

The Libertarian Slant Of Certain Traditionalists:

Disclaimer: Self-evidently, this article may be viewed as contentious. Whether or not one agrees with the Islamic legal code or not, the following article is an attempt to explain how certain traditionalists scholars and academics have attempted to approach this topic.

Consider the following post by Abu Amina Elias on his website:

<https://www.abuaminaelias.com/dailyhadithonline/2013/01/29/umar-catch-drinking-party-spy/>

“ Umar on Spying: Umar catches drinking party, lets them go

Abdur Rahman ibn Awf reported: He would patrol the city at night with Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, and on one occasion they were walking when the lamp of a household caught their attention. They approached it until they heard loud voices inside the door. Umar grabbed the hand of Abdur Rahman and he said, “Do you know whose house this is?” He said no. Umar said, “This is the house of Rabi’ah ibn Umayyah ibn Khalaf, and they are inside drinking wine right now! What do you think?” Abdur Rahman said, “Indeed, I think we have done what Allah has prohibited for us. Allah Almighty said, ‘Do not spy,’ (49:12) and we have spied on them.” Umar turned away and he left them alone.

Source: al-Mustadrak 8198

Grade: Sahih (authentic) according to Al-Dhahabi”

At first, It may seem like a normal post on a certain tradition for a companion. However, this report has an important role in discussions of an Islamic political system. It is used to show how a Caliphate (ideally or theoretically), would not interfere in the private lives of people (read as “public-private” distinction).

Take the following article, on the issue of the apostasy punishment in Islam, and see whether this same notion is at play as well:

<https://www.abuaminaelias.com/did-the-prophet-kill-apostates/>

“ ... Minor apostasy is when a person embraces Islam while knowing its virtues and later rejects it. There is no legal punishment for the minor apostate as long as they do not try to physically harm the Muslim community. Major apostasy is when a person embraces Islam

while knowing its virtues and later rejects it and adds to this a call for violent rebellion against the Muslim authorities. Such a crime is equivalent to high treason and in its most severe case can carry the death penalty as an act of self-defense for the community.

Allah said:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ أَرَادُوا كُفْرًا لَمْ يَكُنِ اللَّهُ لِيُغْفِرَ لَهُمْ وَلَا لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ سَبِيلًا

Verily, those who believed and then disbelieved, then believed and then disbelieved and increased in disbelief, never will Allah forgive them nor will He guide them to a right way.

Surah An-Nisa 4:137

In this verse, Allah describes a person who apostates from Islam twice and He does not prescribe legal punishment for him, but rather He only warns the apostate about severe punishment in the Hereafter. This demonstrates that the general rule is an apostate should be left alone, as the Quran prohibits compulsion in religion.

Allah said:

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ

There is no compulsion in religion. The truth is distinct from misguidance.

Surah Al-Baqarah 2:256

And He said:

وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ

Say: The truth is from your Lord. So whoever wills let him believe, and whoever wills let him disbelieve.

Surah Al-Kahf 18:29

Because of this, the Prophet did not punish people simply because they rejected Islam.

Jabir reported: A bedouin came to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, and gave the pledge of allegiance for embracing Islam. The next day he came with a fever and said, "Please cancel my pledge." The Prophet refused three times and he said:

الْمَدِينَةُ كَالْكَبِيرِ تَنْفِي خَبَثِهَا، وَيَنْصَعُ طَيِّبُهَا

Medina is like a furnace. It expels its impurities and collects what is pure.

Source: Sahih Bukhari 1784, Grade: Sahih

In this example, a man rejected Islam after embracing it but the Prophet did not apply legal punishment to him.”

Notice how in the above article, there is quite a clear distinction made between the person who simply recants Islam in his private life (aka his personal heart held beliefs), and the one who recants in public and calls for Rebellion/violence constituting a threat to the Public order (aka his public actions). Once again, the Public-Private distinction is at play here.

There are a few underlying concepts at play here. Firstly, there is an assumption that personal beliefs or acts, held or done by a person in their private life, are between him and God. As a consequence, the government can't interfere in, or carry out surveillance of, a person in the refuge of his home. Another assumption is the liberty that God has granted the individual, which translates in a social/political context, whereby a general kind of liberty and freedom should be maintained. This is a trope that is quite common in a lot of Islamic polemics, and is often used by religious scholars and academics alike, to defend the contentious topic of the Islamic Hudood (Penal) Punishments (aka by approaching these Punishments from the angle/assumption that they are not for private acts, but rather for open/public acts).

Take, for example, the argument Asrar Rashid posits in his book “Islam answers Atheism” regarding the Islamic punishment for Homosexuality. He responds to Lawrence Krauss's objection to the punishment, by asserting that public displays (aka in a societal setting with Muslims, which constitute a violation of their moral code) are subject to punishment, not private acts. Furthermore, in his book “Intellectual Intifada”, he asserts that a Caliphate would not be an all-encompassing, Orwellian, technocratic state. Of course, Shaykh Asrar is familiar with the western intellectual tradition, and its emphasis on individual liberty and opposing intrusive government forces, and with this backdrop in mind, it makes sense for him to address this concern as a possible attack on a Caliphate system. He also maintains the importance of not punishing individuals for private sins, highlighting his general opposition to a totalitarian regime that robs people of their god-given liberties as part of his model of a Caliphate (what I would term the Asrarian/Asrarist Model).

The same angle is applied to other issues, such as censorship, Sectarianism, and a pluralistic society. Such scholars/academics often point to a Muslim past whereby multiple religions/sects lived side by side, such as in Baghdad during the Abbasid Caliphate. They may also point to the Quranic/Prophetic model as proof for religious tolerance.

The question comes - are such ideas foreign or not to Islamic Jurisprudence? Although the expressions/wordings/terminology used to describe such concepts may indeed be foreign, and influenced by discourse with western political models, in theory, not much. It's quite clear that such readings can be based within primary Islamic texts, and such a precedent can be taken from the Prophetic/Rashidun model, which expounds upon the Quranic model (as per the above examples and quotes). Whilst Islamic Jurisprudence is not a completely liberal endeavour, like most pre-modern ideologies/systems of thought, there is a general kind of liberty granted, in a way which modern peoples may not understand. That is, the fact that the government generally did not interfere in the private lives of people, as long as they did not engage in public violence/rebellion. A quite common argument in certain libertarian circles is

that pre-modern systems of governance, such as monarchy, guaranteed and preserved liberty better than modern systems such as democracy. As such, it is an interesting angle to take.

Of course, and self-evidently, there are aspects of Islamic Jurisprudence/Politics that are not liberal.

Liberty is an important value, but it is not the only one taken into consideration. Other values, such as authority, purity, safety, etc, are also important. The basis for this Jurisprudence, for Muslims, is not ideas of liberty or concepts of authority, but rather Divine revelation by God and the words of the Prophet (Peace be upon him). Yet, for Muslims, such values can be properly operationalised and employed via following this model.

Of course, emphasis on the application of these punishments for public, as opposed to private, acts, may be influenced in part by exposure to the western political discourse, yet it is not a non-organic, or even completely alien, intellectual development.

As such, we see how certain traditionalists have attempted to reconcile notions of liberty with the Islamic legal code, creating a kind of libertarian approach to this topic.

On gradual change facilitating the prerequisite conditions for events to occur, and how this applies to religious eschatology.

Take the following hadith, for example:

“No tribulation occurs except it is in preparation of the Dajjal (Antichrist/ One-eyed deceiver).”

The conditions for the arrival of Dajjal are established, thus by various gradual historical, societal, and civilisational processes. Muslims do not necessarily view an inherent arc to history, at least not insofar as progressivists may view it. But neither do they view historical processes without meaning or pattern - the Quran asserts that God has his “Sunnah (Ways)” in how he acts with his creation, and for the Semitic religions, there is a kind of development throughout history, whereby we are reaching a linear trajectory, a culminatory end point, as symbolised by the coming, or second coming back, of the Messiah.

This is, of course, all based within its very human context. Modernists, of course, may symbolically interpret miraculous eschatological predictions, whilst Traditionalists may hold them to be literally true. However, the reality is (as what can partially reconcile these two opinions) that these Miraculous events, just like non-miraculous events, are facilitated in their occurrence by the various historical processes which will create the prerequisite conditions for these events to occur. We can understand this on a material basis - how one event leads to another. The big jump, perhaps, that I would make, is to assert the same is true for miraculous events to occur.

Reality is complex, and there is an interplay of different dimensions to existence. Thus (like I have explained in previous articles), that any given reality can have multiple dimensions to it. Thus, a set of events, or interlinked phenomena, simultaneously have a material explanation, and a non material explanation to them - they are not conflicting explanations of said reality, but rather different paradigms to explain different aspects of that reality.

However, one difficulty that may arise is the interplay of these different dimensions - do they link to each other, and can they interplay with one another? It is plausible that material developments set up the conditions for non-material occurrences, because, like we have mentioned, as any given reality have both the material and non material dimension to them, certain “non-material” processes may be taking place at the same time as the material processes to give rise to such events, even if we are unaware of them. The same can be said vice versa.

There are no coincidences - history is a series of connected, fluid and continuous events, not discrete or isolated from one another. William Barclay’s excellent work “The Plain Man Looks At The Apostles’ Creed”, discusses these different views on history, and furthermore how our theological and philosophical views affect our views of history, and the way history occurs or operates.

Coming back to our original point, we can thus see how these gradual historical changes bring about these eschatological events. This helps us to reconcile (at least partially) the conflict of modern vs traditional interpretations of these events, because these miraculous or supernatural occurrences occur precisely when historical processes have played out in such a way, that the material (+ non-material conditions, arguably so) are in place for these events to finally occur.

An example of this is the narrations about the Quran being lifted. This is in the context, that there will no longer be any muslims, no longer any believers left to recite it or preserve it. This reflects a rather tragic aspect of human existence - things come in and out of existence. These ideas, these traditions, the firmly held beliefs, come and go with the passage of time, as memories fade away from the collective conscience. The past is cloaked in mystery, to be assigned to the realm of the unknowable, of what is unsure to us. Far gone is the time we were based in the context of these traditions and ideals, and they say they have over man. Rise, fall, stagnate, decline, disappear - all may be viewed as inevitabilities of our condition and existence, indeed of existence itself!

The life stages and cycles of any given thing, only for it to vanish into the abyss - such is the story of humanity. We may see how the ideas and traditions of 5000 years ago may no longer have a sway over us today - indeed, many are outright forgotten and lost to history. The same will be true for us and our descendants (if, indeed, they do live on till then), 5000 years from now.

Thus, such miraculous events will occur, coinciding precisely when the conditions shall be set up by the gradual material, historical (and ultimately, very, very human) processes where islam will no longer be practised - indeed, its practise, knowledge of it, and believers in it, will all go extinct. This is the tragic reality and fate of religions - those which have gone or will come after us!

As per the laws of human nature and existence, of our condition - Islam will cease to be known, believed or practised in. It is at this point in history, "when the Quran shall be lifted".

(Ps: for those with a secular, atheistic, agnostic, or materialist mindset, you can of course symbolically understand this as the knowledge of the Quran being lost, "And the Quran being lifted" i.e due to various historical processes, gradually, the Quran shall be lost to history. Of course, traditionalists can understand this through a miraculous lens. However, I think both groups can at least partially agree with the above explanation I have given.)

The Mystic-Warrior as the archetype in whom the act of Jihad (struggle) reaches its utmost, complete and perfect expression

To begin with, on a broader level, we define Jihad as a kind of struggle. In a religious context, it primarily refers to struggling in the way of God. As such, jihad has multiple applications. On a spiritual level, it would imply the struggle against the self. On a broader socio-political level, it may entail struggle against corruption, or struggle in war (when done for a valid cause, such as in self-defense). It thus involves and includes that which is This-Worldly and Material, and what is Other-Worldly and Spiritual.

The lifestyles of the Mystic and the Warrior, thus can be seen as quite similar, although to achieve different objectives. They both lead lives of extreme self-discipline, of self-denial, and of delayed gratification. They may seek higher ideals, such as honour, virtue, truth, prowess, greatness, and even the Divine. However, one seeks the spiritual and other-worldly, the other is material and this-worldly.

This is why you may see these two archetypes at times combined in one persona to give rise to the mystic-warrior, so that one whose attention is turned inwards, towards their spiritual state, also builds up his strength and prowess in order to achieve and attain certain higher aims.

We can see, thus, many great Sufi-Ghazis within the Islamic tradition. These include the likes of the Algerian Freedom Fighter and Scholar Abdul Qadir Al-Jazairi, Imam Shamil, the Ottomans, Salah ud-Deen Al-Ayyubi, Nur al-Deen Az-Zengi, and more.

Even in other traditions, we see this archetype pop up, such as Richard the Lionheart, and even possibly you could consider the likes of the Japanese Samurai in this regard.

(Ps: this was inspired by lets talk religion's article on Abdul Qadir al - Jazairi, credit to him for it:

https://open.substack.com/pub/itsfiliphholm/p/abd-al-qadir-al-jazairi?r=2x9vt5&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=web).

Reflections on Religious Interpretation and changes in the Anglican Church

1) A lot of religious teachings by nature may be ambiguous, hence they may lead to differing interpretations

2) There is a difference between the Fundamentals of any given faith and secondary or tertiary issues

3) In practice, many religious people may still do certain things looked down upon in scriptures if they are not too severe. I think what most religious people emphasize are the Fundamentals of their faith - some may have a more ritualistic approach, but some may take a more lenient approach.

When it comes to the fundamental points of the faith, such as belief in God or belief in messengers, for example, people would agree. But then they may have differing interpretations, say, of the nature of God's attributes.

Or they may agree on ritual prayer, but disagree on its nature.

The thing is, ultimately, everybody has an interpretation, and different schools of thought will have to decide which opinions they do or don't consider in the fold of orthodoxy.

Absolutely, hence why different schools of thought in different faiths draw the lines around orthodoxy quite rigidly, even when it seems arbitrary.

Of female bishops in the Anglican Church. The bible itself has many verses which say women should be submissive, silent, and cannot be church leaders.

Perhaps it isn't consistent with their own teachings, perhaps they want to interpret them differently or selectively.

Well tbf, religions don't necessarily have to become more "liberal", whether you think that is a good or bad thing, it is unreasonable to think that religions, with their own teachings and philosophical framework, will be reconcilable with modern secular humanist ideologies. But if they want to interpret their teachings in that way, that is their choice.

Well, yes, they would have to deal with the theological implications of their interpretation, and any inconsistencies that may cause.

(Afterword: A fundamental fallacy of Liberalism, or interpreting religion in light of it, is that it ignores that within the context of these traditions, liberty stems from order, not it existing in a vacuum. Hence, violating the principles of said tradition causes a break from tradition, within which liberty properly functions, as understood with its checks and balances).

Some thoughts on the Inherent value of human life:

Life by its nature reproduces or survives for its own ends - it is distinguished by this need to replicate its own form for its own ends. This is ultimately organic and natural, such that it could not be merely socially engineered out of the public, without some kind of state tyranny.

Furthermore, the elites may push conditions upon the rest of the population essentially making it difficult for them to have kids. They may do so out of some kind of suicidal empathy, but this in fact exacerbates already prevalent societal issues, and does not make them better, such as the atomisation of society, and the breakdown of families and communities.

Also, the view that certain segments of the population should not reproduce, is a view which essentially can be eugenics lite. Such as, for example, the poor shouldn't have kids. What this essentially amounts to is this kind of suicidal empathy, to bring about something much worse than what you claim to oppose in the first place.

This is sometimes the issue with the Anti-Natalist, or indeed even with the extreme natalist camp, that they perhaps don't view human existence holistically. Thus, although our existence has much harm, it also has much good and benefit to it. Thus, our existence has a kind of duality to it. But furthermore, if we view simply in terms of harms and benefits, the extinction of a species, or the suffering caused by it, far outweighs any benefits it may bring. Furthermore, the utilitarian thinking of "humanity causes greater harm to nature, to other animals, to the children it brings to the world", so we ought to get rid of it, justifies the worst tyrannies of all, the worst crimes imaginable.

On a more practical note, what if our ancestors who had to go through hardship decided not to reproduce, would we have been where we are today? The struggle inherent to our condition gives our existence much meaning, as "There is not for man except for what he strives for" (Quran). The fact that we are able to overcome hardship, that our spirit wills on, makes humanity admirable, and makes his achievements remarkable (insert Indomitable Spirit Meme here).

Reflections on Levi Ackermann:

The spirit of comradery:

In AOT, there are many characters who reflect the great value in comradery. For example, I could mention the likes of Jean, Connie, Pieck, etc. However, the one who most stands out to me at least is Levi Ackermann. Levi is many things - including being "humankind's strongest soldier". However, one thing that really sticks out is his great compassion, love and care for his comrades (even if he doesn't always show it, or even if he acts against such emotions at times).

Growing up, Levi's mother passed away, and his father remains unknown. The only father-figure in his life, Kenny Ackermann, left him at a young age, but not before teaching him how to handle himself (and by handling himself, i mean how to be a successful criminal in the underground city where he resided). Obviously, such a background deeply affects him - perhaps he seeks to compensate for the lack of connection to a family member, perhaps by subsuming himself with his friends and fellow comrades, treating them like the family he never had.

He is eventually recruited by Erwin Smith to join the Survey Corps. His first campaign sees him display his Ackermann powers. Sadly, the Ackermann clan has been persecuted on the island, as they refused to submit to the King's authority to live in ignorant bliss on the Island after the population's memories of the life before the walls was wiped away. Eventually, this persecution ceased when the king of the walls and Kenny Ackerman developed a close friendship. This also helps explain Levi's lack of family or relatives growing up.

Yet, tragedy struck, as two of his closest friends, who had been with him in his criminal underground days, lost their lives fighting the Titan. He falls into a furious rage, going berserk and absolutely slaughtering the titan responsible for their deaths. After this, he remains within the survey corps, deciding to trust and follow the leadership of Erwin Smith.

Yet this is only the beginning of his tragedies. Time and time again, he survives, in fact thrives in battle - being 5'0 and lean, with a smaller frame than most, yet still being incredibly powerful, even for somebody of the Ackermann clan - his ability allowing him to defeat even the strongest and most intelligent titans. And yet, in each instance, each struggle, more and more of his fellow comrades are slain. Particularly tragic instances include the massacre of the Levi squad at the hands of the Female Titan. Perhaps the worst of them all is Erwin Smith's suicidal charge against the beast titan, which allows Levi to take it out, leading to the Survey Corps eventual victory in the battle of Shiganshina against impossible odds. What may come close is his whole platoon being turned into titans, with him having to end them off one by one.

Yet despite such losses, one thing remains constant throughout his days as a warrior - he seems to carry on with him his dead comrades wills - their hopes, dreams, fears - and his shoulders bear the burden of carrying forward the collective legacy of his survey corps comrades.

This is most heavily symbolised in his desire to fulfil Erwin's final common - that is, to kill the beast titan. However, it keeps on slipping away from him each time he is on the verge of taking him out. Symbolically, he finally takes out the Beast titan in the battle of Heaven and Earth, which can also be viewed as a culmination of the legacy of the survey corps.

How is that so? A question that constantly arises is that "Would the old guard of the survey corps (specifically Erwin Smith) support the rumbling?" Would they have gone to such extreme measures - take out the rest of the world to defend their own race, the eldians?

A culmination of this subtle discourse throughout the story post chapter 90 - a conflict between the more ultra-nationalist Yeagerists and the more Humanist Libertarian Old Guard types (although many of the old guard defect to the Yeagerists, alongside the fundamental dynamic force of the Yeagerists being the younger new guard) - Levi, a seasoned veteran, and oldest member of the Survey corps at that time, gives his answer - "No, because the survey corps dreamt of a fundamentally idealistic world, a world where humans were free from fear of the titans" - In other words, liberty of man from tyranny, fear, and the powerlessness felt from being like birds in a cage, at the mercy of the titans.

He then goes on to say, "I don't regret Erwin, choosing the kid who had the same glint in his eyes as you". In other words, Armin was the one who inherited, or carried on, the idealistic legacy of the old survey corps, alongside its more humanistic element. This can be seen in his principled opposition to the rumbling, and his efforts in leading the alliance to finally defeat it. (An interesting parallel may be Floch, who, in the wake of the arguable fracturing of Erwin's legacy, arguably inherited his leadership skills, alongside the more realist, machiavellian, calculating and ruthless side of Erwin's thought).

After finally defeating the rumbling, Levi has a vision of all his deceased comrades. "Your efforts weren't in vain" - giving each other the salute, whilst vanishing, and, for the first time, we see Levi shedding tears. Perhaps these tears were of joy, at the will of his comrades finally reaching fruition. He himself would be bound to a wheelchair for his remaining years - yet, after all loss, they seemed to have won.

So what to make of all of it? If it truly wasn't pointless then what was it that drove Levi to fight on? I would venture to say that it was the collective will of his comrades which he inherited - to fight on, to defeat the titans, to give freedom to mankind. Levi's own resolve grew stronger

with each death, each comrade lost, each will inherited - the fire, so to speak, of his will grew brighter and stronger with each legacy inherited, until it turned into a magnificent inferno.

In his story, we see the glory and honour, not just in fighting, but fighting alongside one's comrades, till the last breath is expelled, and the last ounce is spent...

The Outcome is uncertain, the decision is not -

“ You can either choose to trust yourself, or trust your comrades - you never know what the outcome will be.” That is what Levi says to Eren whilst fleeing from the female Titan. He chooses to trust his comrades, leading to its capture. Moments later, the female titan once again attacks, leading to the death of his squad. Eren chose to trust his comrades a second time, yet it went terribly, terribly wrong. So, was he wrong? But then, he chose to trust himself a final time, leading to the female titans capture. However, a moment's hesitation from him led to her crystallising, unable to be consumed to have her powers transferred. So, was he in the right, or in the wrong, or perhaps both at the same time ?

This leads on to a discussion very much central to most of AOT - what is the right decision to make, given the outcome is always uncertain? AOT masterfully represents this duality to our existence - the seeming randomness and chaos coupled with definite laws, structures and factors surrounding our existence. Each choice can have infinite possibilities - but only one of these is manifest. At times, reality may offer hope, optimism, respite - at other times, cruelty, fear, dismay. In many cases, the reality of something, or its consequences, aren't fully apparent until later on.

So then, what is to be done, if the outcome is uncertain? AOT seems to provide the following answer? Although what may arise from our acts is uncertain, our acts themselves are the only things we have control over - thus, we can only be certain in terms of what we do, not in terms of what happens to us or others, whatever is outside our control. Hence, all we can do, and should do, is act to the best of our conscience and ability. This culminates most of all in Eren doing the rumbling - even if it is a mistake, his hope is to rid the world of Titan powers, killing 80% of mankind to protect his friends and loved ones. Even though later on, Paradis is eventually destroyed, does that make it a mistake? Perhaps, but who could have known? He ultimately did what he could - act to the best of his ability and conscience.

“ Even if this is a mistake, I won't regret it, the only right thing to do is believe in myself fully”.
(Akuma no Ko)

We all have hills to die on

A Question one may ask is “How much evidence would it take for you to change your mind on X Topic?”

A pertinent counter question is - “If a complex debate, which has spanned a countless period of time, has raged on, would it be fair to change one’s mind?”

Another pertinent counter-question is that- “If one simply changes their mind on hearing a better argument (which doesn't discount the possibility of an even better counter-argument being made in the future), may that not also be an indicator of intellectual cowardice and flimsiness?”

Although we should be open minded, we all have intellectual hills to die on, so to say.
Semantic trench warfare, spanning eons
Often the disagreement is on a fundamental issue
May be arbitrary, still very real
What it means to be human
Intellectuals can afford to be unbiased (in a vacuum/ivory tower), not in real world conditions
Not to say we shouldn't be open to new evidence
Inevitably, there are certain things one has to be firm on
What it means to be human

Critiques of the International Human Rights Order:

The common point that is used to defend the International Human Rights order is that these are an Objective, Neutral, and Universal order. However, how truthful is this claim?

Firstly, context is important. These ideals or values are the result of gradual philosophical, political and social developments, particularly within the Western tradition. We see this development from the Renaissance, to the Enlightenment, to the Modern Western Liberal order.

An important point that is then raised is that these standards may be Eurocentric/Westcentric, and based on said Eurocentric model. Furthermore, there are disagreements amongst the western nations themselves on the application and practise of said rights. For example, let's take the Freedom of Religious Expression.

The French model asserts their secularism as a kind of freedom from religion, which can be understood in light of the French Revolution and distrust of organised religion. Hence, there is a ban, for example, of wearing hijabs and crosses to school.

This is very different to the American model, which, following on from the historical English political tradition and subsequent American one, asserts a kind of Freedom of Religion from state tyranny (at least theoretically).

Hence, we should ask, does France violate a fundamental human right by banning the hijab or cross in certain areas of the public sphere? And what to make of the fact that these western nations don't agree on how this right should fundamentally be operationalised in society?

What about the right of free expression? Governments have engaged in censorship, particularly of those who have been critical of the liberal consensus order. Julian Assange and Edward Snowden are interesting examples that come to mind. There thus is no consistent standard for applying or protecting free speech rights?

Are they really neutral or objective? There are ideals or values which we wouldn't have considered as rights 20 to 30 years ago, which we do not. Rights relating to gender and sexuality come to mind, as an example. Obviously, these are not so self-evident so as to have been historical truths, but rather gradual social and intellectual developments as the collective conscience of the society moves towards the acceptance of these ideas.

This framing has important implications, as it has to be an organic development/struggle within the context of a society, just as with any other ideals/values. They thus can't be enforced from the outside, or be externally imposed, but rather the people in the societies have to gradually come to understand these ideals, and collectively accept them.

This then raises the biggest issue - the ideological justification for an international order where the most powerful nations bully the less powerful/ideologically opposed nations. Yet

ironically, even these opposing nations use the language and terminology of human rights. Two or more sides of a conflict may use “human rights” to justify or defend themselves, or attack the opposing side.

There is thus an important distinction to make - It is not the case that there are no universal moral laws that apply to all throughout time and place. Rather, there is no one unifying interpretation of said human rights, and how to apply them. This is not a disagreement on the concept itself, but rather on fundamentals regarding these concepts. For example, is a democratic system the most suitable to facilitate the enshrining of said human rights in the laws of a nation? What are the limits of free speech laws? And what considerations are there to account for when discussing these rights - liberty, safety, authority and order, morality, purity?

What about Alternative models for said human rights? What about outright partial or Complete rejection?

A Postmodernist perspective may present the idea that this is part of the metanarrative, or ideology, of the western liberal hegemony. Leftists and Marxists similarly may be critical of such a part of ideology, used to justify, for example, neo-imperialism. Or, feminists or liberationist thinkers may assert that such human rights do not in fact give expression to the full extent of these rights?

Or, for example, we may consider certain religious models. The Islamic model may be based on Maqasid Ash Sharia (The Aims of the Law), the historical charter of Medina, and the last sermon of the Prophet. Christians may base theirs on the Sermon on the mount, or Christ's teachings of radical love and empathy.

(This Shall Be Continued In Part 2).

Part 2:

We can now continue on to Particularist, or Folkish critiques, of certain International Human Rights. So the argument may go, that different groups of people have different moral codes that are particular to them. As such, there is no meaning for universal moral laws.

Whilst there is partial truth in this claim, this doesn't fully account for the fact that there are certain laws which are universally known by all, in all times and places. For example, killing innocent people is wrong. Of course, how this has been applied (whether consistently or not), doesn't mean that we understand this to be false in and of itself as a concept.

If some may argue that these abstract concepts don't mean anything in the real world, then we ought to bring into play the is-ought distinction. In other words, just because something is, doesn't mean it ought to be that way. Our very consciousness allows us to think and understand the world in these abstract terms. Furthermore, as humans gradually evolve and grow, we reach new and new understandings of morality and ethics. This isn't some

progressive argument, but rather the moral principles that man intuitively understands are gradually developed upon.

There may also be the Darwinistic Humanist argument against such human rights. For example, they may assert that the strong have a right to conquer, to subjugate -the subjugation of the weak is just part of the law of the jungle. We may even use Nietzschean concepts of slave morality. Apart from being a brutalistic picture of humanity, it ignores man's basic moral intuitions. In fact, even if we were to take an evolutionary perspective, we can understand Altruism as part of man's survival strategy, so to speak (See Richard Dawkins The Selfish Gene). It is in the reproductive self-interest of man to display altruistic behaviours to others. Expanding this on a global scale, it is in the self-interest of man's survival and reproduction, to at the very least, attempt to adhere to commonly shared moral laws.

However, dehumanisation of the out-group, or the other, leads to the violation of these moral intuitions. This leads us back to the original point - whilst, at least certain fundamental moral values can be universally known, these are interpreted differently and applied differently by different groups of people. As such, it should be apparent that whilst there are certain shared universal moral intuitions between people of all times and places, the specific political concept of "human rights", at least in our contemporary society, are not merely neutral or objective, insofar as these are historical developments, in the context of a specific tradition and civilisation. So, whilst critiquing the usage of these "human rights" as ideological justification to push different political agendas, such as engaging in neo-imperialism, we can acknowledge the core reality of shared moral intuitions by all peoples between time and place.

End of Article

A Reflection on Predestination and Compatibilism in Orthodox Sunni Teachings

"On all sides of us, a whole world of miraculous diversity and proportions stretches out before our eyes. Yet if all of the human beings in this world were to come together, they would not be able to create even one tiny grain of sand." (from "What is Islam (Goodword): Islamic Children's Books on the Quran, the Hadith and the Prophet Muhammad" by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan)

This is derived from the Hadith:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَبَّاسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ: "كُنْتُ خَلْفَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَوْمًا، فَقَالَ: يَا غُلَامُ! إِنِّي أَعَلَّمْتُكَ كَلِمَاتٍ: احْفَظْ اللَّهَ يَحْفَظْكَ، احْفَظْ اللَّهَ تَجِدْهُ تُجَاهَكَ، إِذَا سَأَلْتَ فَاسْأَلِ اللَّهَ، وَإِذَا اسْتَعْنَيْتَ فَاسْتَعِنْ بِاللَّهِ، وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ الْأُمَّةَ لَوِ اجْتَمَعَتْ عَلَى أَنْ يَنْفَعُوكَ بِشَيْءٍ لَمْ يَنْفَعُوكَ إِلَّا بِشَيْءٍ قَدْ كَتَبَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ؛ رُفِعَتْ الْأَقْلَامُ، وَجُفَّتِ الصُّحُفُ". رَوَاهُ التِّرْمِذِيُّ [رقم: 2516] وَقَالَ: حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ صَحِيحٌ. وَفِي رِوَايَةٍ غَيْرِ التِّرْمِذِيِّ: "احْفَظْ اللَّهَ تَجِدْهُ أَمَامَكَ، تَعْرِفْ إِلَى اللَّهِ فِي الرَّخَاءِ يَعْرِفُكَ فِي الشَّدَّةِ، وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ مَا أَخْطَأَكَ لَمْ يَكُنْ لِيُصِيبِكَ، وَمَا أَصَابَكَ لَمْ يَكُنْ لِيُخْطِنَكَ، وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ النَّصْرَ مَعَ الصَّبْرِ، وَأَنَّ الْفَرْجَ مَعَ الْكُرْبِ، وَأَنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا".

On the authority of Abu Abbas Abdullah bin Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: One day I was behind the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) [riding on the same mount] and he said, "O young man, I shall teach you some words [of advice]: Be mindful of Allah and Allah will protect you. Be mindful of Allah and you will find Him in front of you. If you ask, then ask Allah [alone]; and if you seek help, then seek help from Allah [alone]. And know that if the nation were to gather together to benefit you with anything, they would not benefit you except with what Allah had already prescribed for you. And if they were to gather together to harm you with anything, they would not harm you except with what Allah had already prescribed against you. The pens have been lifted and the pages have dried."

It was related by at-Tirmidhi, who said it was a good and sound hadeeth. Another narration, other than that of Tirmidhi, reads:

Be mindful of Allah, and you will find Him in front of you. Recognize and acknowledge Allah in times of ease and prosperity, and He will remember you in times of adversity. And know that what has passed you by [and you have failed to attain] was not going to befall you, and what has befallen you was not going to pass you by. And know that victory comes with patience, relief with affliction, and hardship with ease.

Hadith 19, 40 Hadith an-Nawawi
<https://sunnah.com/nawawi40:19>

This concept has important implications in the Islamic Tradition, in particular the Sunni one, on discussions of free will and predestination.

Islamic Tradition, in particular the Sunnah on discussions of free will and predestination.

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Imam an-Nawawi

Translated by
Abdassamad Clarke

His saying, "And know that if the ummah...". Since man hopes for good treatment from whomever he loves, and fears bad treatment from whomever he is wary of, Allah asserts the hopelessness of [expecting] any benefit from people by His saying, "*If Allah afflicts you with harm, no one can remove it except Him. If He desires good for you, no one can avert His favour.*"⁷ Nor does any of this negate His saying, exalted is He, when He relates the story of Musa, upon him blessings and peace, "*and I am afraid they will kill me,*"⁸ and His saying, exalted is He, "*we are afraid that he might persecute us or overstep the bounds,*"⁹ and similarly His saying, "*take*

⁶ i.e. the creation is interdependent.

⁷ Surah Yunus: 107.

⁸ Surat al-Qasas: 33.

⁹ Surah Ta Ha: 44.

THE COMPLETE FORTY HADITH

all necessary precautions"¹⁰, etc. Indeed safety is by the decree of Allah and destruction is by the decree of Allah, and man flees from the causes of destruction to the causes of safety. Allah, exalted is He, says, "*Do not cast yourselves into destruction.*"¹¹ There is his saying ﷺ "Know that help is with patience," and he said ﷺ "Do not wish to meet the enemy, and ask Allah for safety. If you meet them be patient and do not run away, for truly Allah is with those who are patient." Similarly, patience in affliction in a place is followed by help, for there is his saying ﷺ "Truly deliverance is with distress (*al-karb*)" and distress is 'a severe trial', so when the trial is severe, Allah, exalted is He, follows it with deliverance, as it is said, "Crisis, be severe! You will pass."

His saying, "Truly with difficulty there is ease,"¹² and it has been narrated in another hadith that he said, "A difficulty will never overcome two eases," and that is that Allah mentioned difficulty twice and He mentioned ease twice, however according to the Arabs whenever a definite noun is repeated it is singular since the second definite article is for distinguishing a noun as one already known to the reader and hearer [and thus there is only one difficulty mentioned but two eases].¹³

¹⁰ Surat an-Nisa': 70.

¹¹ Surat al-Baqarah: 194.

¹² 'Abdullah Ibrahim al-Ansari says that this is a hadith which is agreed upon. There is also the word of Allah, exalted is He, "*For truly with hardship comes ease; truly with hardship comes ease.*" Surat al-Inshirah, *ayat* 5-6.

¹³ Some of the people of knowledge have pointed out that Allah, exalted is He, says, "*Allah will appoint after difficulty, ease,*" Surat at-Talaq: 7, and that this is the second ease mentioned in the Qur'an which comes after the difficulty, as well as the ease which is with the difficulty, and Allah knows best.

Thus, it presents the standard compatibilist narrative found within Orthodox Sunnism - despite man being bound by decree, he still had a degree of free will (partial free will), and hence accountability and moral responsibility is still retained by the individual.

The Divine Horror - Cosmic Terror at the Almighty's Sheer Might and Wrath

When it comes to (at least popular) Theistic discourse about the Divine, we often tend to focus on Divine Mercy. We tend to focus on Divine grace, peace, love, etc. This is true of a lot of popular discourse that I have, at least personally, seen within the Islamic and Christian traditions. Of course, with good reason - most people like hearing about Divine Mercy, the power of repentance, forgiving and pardoning, etc etc. Arguably, this may be a consequence of the softening of religious discourse to cope with an increasingly secular society, where, perhaps, certain religious themes may be taboo for topics of preaching and popular discussion.

Which actually brings me on to one aspect of, let us call it, "Divine Imagery", in popular discourse, which tends to be overlooked, which is the awe-inspiring attributes of the Divine. Those that instill this sense of fear, even horror, at the sheer might and wrath of God. These feelings of Cosmic Horror can be inspired from certain creation, just as those feelings of love can be inspired by other forms of creation.

"The thunder glorifies His praises, as do the angels in awe of Him. He sends thunderbolts, striking with them whoever He wills. Yet they dispute about Allah. And He is tremendous in might." (Quran 13:13). This is a rather intriguing verse from the Quran, as it essentially delineates how certain creation can reflect the awe-inspiring, even fear-invoking aspects of Divinity. "The thunder glorifies his praise" thus demonstrates how it precisely, by its very nature, inspires this kind of Awe and Terror in the one who hears it.

"And the Angels from his fear/awe" is quite fascinating, as per (your typically held) Islamic theology, Angels don't have Free Will of the kind Human Beings have. In other words, they have to obey the Orders of God. Yet their worship is not merely inspired by this kind of conviction in or imagery of Divine Mercy, of Grace and Love, but also by this kind of Awe-Inspiring, Fear-Invoking, Terror and Horror, due to the utter might of the Divine. It is thus something fundamentally engrained within the psyche of those who believe in the Divine to not just view their worship and obedience through the lens of Love and Hope, but also through the lens of Fear, of Awe.

Interestingly, Ibn Battah in his work "Al-Ibanah an Sharia til Firqah An Najiyah", has dedicated a whole chapter to the premise that "Faith is between fear and hope (Al-Iman bayn al Khawf wal Rija)". Thus, faith is inspired not merely by hope in the mercy of God, but also fear of his Punishment. This is then further emphasised by the following - "And he sends thunderbolts, then he inflicts with it whoever he wills". This further emphasises that element of Cosmic Horror at play - the wrath of God manifested by the very nature of the things he creates.

Of course, whether or not one agrees with notions of Divine wrath, or that an all-merciful God would invoke fear of him in such manner, or act in a, what some may view as, an unmerciful manner (See Asrar Rashid's Islam Answers Atheism, where he discusses some of these objections and responses to them), it is important to note that Divinity, and creation,

can also be viewed through this lens. It is not necessarily the case that only a mercy-centric lens can inspire belief in a Divine being, but rather that a fear-centric lens, or indeed a perspective which attempts to combine and synthesise both of them (as certain Muslims may claim), can also perform the same function.

This fundamental Cosmic Horror, is a sign that the creation can inspire fear in the hearts of those who observe, which acts as a sign of Divine Might. It can further act as a sign of the strangeness of the Divine mystery behind these creations and their existence. It further acts as a reflection of the mighty, sheer awe-inspiring nature of the Divine. That there are creations out there, not just wondrous, but also terrifying, in the implications of their existence.

Of course, these themes of horror and terror are reflected in different pieces of Art. The most self-evident example of these being Horror as a genre in Literature and Movies, for example. But there is another interesting case - that of Gothic architecture. The kind of domineering, dark aesthetic that permeates one's immediate vision, sending chills down a person's spine... The sheer overwhelming, awe-inspiring, nature of it.

I see a similar spirit expressed in Exodus 15:11 (from the Bible):

“ Who among the gods
is like you, Lord?
Who is like you—
majestic in holiness,
awesome in glory,
working wonders? “

Man, the Divine Vicegerent (as per the Quranic narrative), also reflects this awe-striking, fear-invoking nature of the Divine. As per the Prophetic narration, narrated by Ahmad, considered authentic - "I have been granted victory by means of awe" (See <https://hadeethenc.com/en/browse/hadith/10025>). Thus, the Prophetic model also reflects this.

This idea has a number of important implications:

It can be used to snatch away an argument typically used by atheists and flip it on its head, by giving it this kind of spiritual dimension. This is often lost on the Theists, both the Monotheistic and Pagan types alike.

Indeed, in many of the Pagan faiths, this would play quite well into their imagery and idea of "The Gods" as manifested in the form of Warriors or Rulers, etc.

If you look at some of the Hindu "Gods", for example, the imagery employed for them reflects this kind of Divine or Cosmic Horror. (Of course, obviously, I do not agree with polytheism or Paganism, I am simply making this point of how such a teaching may be inferred from Pagan theology as well).

In terms of the Monotheistic faiths (particularly Islam), I have mentioned in my past works, how man, by being the Divine Vicegerent, is the reflection of the Divine Attributes. However, I would in fact also extend this to the other creations, in their own unique way, in that, by their very nature, reflect certain of these Divine Attributes.

However, these are in their own limited, specific ways, whereas man combines within himself the various attributes that reflect the Divine (once again, in their fallible, limited way), by building upon which he attains greater and greater heights of completion/perfection.

Nevertheless, the various creations may thus reflect Divine Mercy, or may reflect, for our purposes, the fear and awe of Divine Might and Wrath.

In "It" by Stephen King, we have the entity known as "It" is essentially this semi-divine being who crashes onto Earth. After billions of years of hibernation, he begins to feed on the living beings in the vicinity of what we come to know as "Derry" (including humans), in a cycle of about once every 27 years.

Of course, I would not agree with the idea of a Semi-Divine being, or of a lesser Divine being. However, there is something underlying at play here which is important to note. This kind of larger than life, almost mysterious, entity. The "Uncanny Valley" of something human, but not quite human.

In essence, it may reflect the realm of the unseen - that part of it which instills fear and terror in the hearts of humanity. That which may at times manifest itself into the material world, yet it is not quite of this realm...

When we look at evil, we may find that it is in fact a perversion. A subversion. A corrupted mirror image of Divine Authority.

There can be more than one dimension or aspect to a given reality. In my previous article, I have mentioned that this kind of Cosmic Horror can reflect the Divine's sheer might and wrath. However, there is an important caveat.

Insofar as it reflects within itself this kind of might and power, this awe-inspiring nature (not in respect to it being posited as "Good" or "Evil"), then in that aspect, we may assert that it reflects Divine Might. However, insofar as we may posit that its power and might is manifested in an "Evil" manner, then we may say that it is a perverted "reflection" of Divine Authority, which, in reality, itself is Just and Good.

Organised Religion - Jews, Muslims, Christians, Imperialism and Ethno-Religious Conflict

This totally won't be controversial.

The Genocide in Palestine, alongside the brutal conflicts taking place currently between the USA/Israel, and Lebanon/Iran, have brought into discussion, not just the current geopolitical situation, but also the history of this region of the world.

In particular, we come to see the history of the Jews and (primarily) the Arabs, of Islam and Judaism.

Although both communities have at times peacefully coexisted, there have also been occasions of conflict and persecution. Of course, this is within the context of the historical Jewish Diaspora, the regular bouts of Anti-Semitism and Jewish persecution.

Naturally, the discussion of religion is important here. In many cases, there is a fundamental interplay between the ideas and material reality of a situation. In many cases, the theological or philosophical debates are inherently linked to socio-political/socio-economic reality.

In the case of the Semitic faiths, we must understand that religion and politics are not necessarily distinct - in fact, they are fundamentally intertwined and connected. Furthermore, there is a fundamental link between religion and ethnic/cultural identity. In the case of Judaism, it quite literally is wedded to the tribal/ethnic identity of the Jewish peoples, hence why you can have secular or atheistic Jews, but rarely will you see, if ever, converts to Judaism. We can further understand this in light of Jewish history, where constant persecution necessitated, for their survival, strong social cohesion and in-group preference.

In the case of Islam, despite being a universalist religion, it is fundamentally connected to the Arab identity. Of course, within the context of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) being an Arab. Incorporated within the legal code of the Islamic faith is the Arabic Language (in terms of needing to be able to read Arabic to recite the Quran and one's prayers), certain Arabic customs of the time, and in particular, the practises of the Arabian Prophet (Peace be upon him, what is understood to be the "Sunnah").

This is then where we get to a fundamental issue - there is some kind of ethnic conflict between the Jews and Arabs, which is intertwined with the Theological conflict between Islam and Judaism. However, there is perhaps something much deeper at play here - that is, both the Jews and the Arabs are an unsettling reality for the other, precisely because they act as historical counters to the narratives that they have about themselves.

You see, the Jewish Peoples, of course, viewed themselves as "God's Chosen People" due to the covenant that was established with them. The institution of Semitic Prophethood, in many instances, thus had an inherent socio-political element to it. There are, of course, examples, such as Jesus Christ (Peace be upon him), who wasn't necessarily outright a political figure (insofar as the Christian/Islamic narratives go), in that he wasn't a political leader. Of course, the Jews don't accept Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) as the Messiah,

instead they believe their Messiah is yet to come, a King who will restore the Jews to the Holy Land.

But of course, there are examples of Prophets who were Leader and Rulers as well (such as David and Solomon, and we may even include Moses in here, Peace be upon them all).

Thus, from the lineage, primarily and in particular, of Isaac, son of Abraham, came the Israelites. Passages such as Genesis 22:9-12, where Abraham is commanded to sacrifice Isaac, as a test from God, are taken as an indication of God choosing and favouring Isaac. Thus, when it states in Genesis - "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you", it is understood as the descendants of Abraham through Isaac (i.e. the Israelites).

However, it also seems to be the case that the covenant was predicated on faithfulness and obedience to God. We thus read in Exodus 19:5-6 - "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel." Thus, the exiles and expulsions from the Holy Land were seen as a kind of Divine Punishment.

Where does the Quran come into this? It firstly does mention the covenant, the favour that the Israelites were granted by God. However, it essentially demonstrates that the covenant was broken due to the unfaithfulness of the Israelites. This is summed up in the verse - "'Remember' when Abraham was tested by his Lord with 'certain' commandments, which he fulfilled. Allah said, 'I will certainly make you into a role model for the people.'" Abraham asked, "What about my offspring?" Allah replied, "My covenant is not extended to the wrongdoers" (Quran 2:124).

Furthermore, the Quran is quite critical of certain segments of the Jews for certain crimes which it presents those segments of the Jews as having committed - "They will be stricken with disgrace wherever they go, unless they are protected by a covenant with Allah or a treaty with the people. They have invited the displeasure of Allah and have been branded with misery for rejecting Allah's revelations and murdering 'His' prophets unjustly. This is 'a fair reward' for their disobedience and violations" (Quran 3:112).

Most importantly, it flips the dynamic of the descendants of Isaac having Divine favour on its head - "Wathilah ibn al-Asqa' reported: The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "Verily, Allah chose Kinanah from the sons of Ishmael, he chose the Quraysh from Kinanah, he chose the tribe of Hashim from the Quraysh, and he chose me from the tribe of Hashim." (Sahih Muslim 2276). It thus follows that it was the Ishmaelites (i.e the Arabs) who have Divine Favour upon them, by the sending of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) amongst them, alongside those who follow him - "Indeed, those who have the best claim to Abraham are his followers, this Prophet,¹ and the believers. And Allah is the Guardian of those who believe (Quran 3:68)."

The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) managed to mobilise the Arabs into a civilisational force, capable of challenging and defeating the two great powers of the time (the Sassanids and Byzantines). He further reorganised them into this vigorous civilisational

force that came to conquer, what was up until that time, the largest empire up until that point in History. They succeeded in not only bringing all of Arabia under the banner of Islam, but also Persia, North Africa, even Spain, and, of particular importance, the region of Syro-Palestine.

And this is where things get interesting. The Quran asserts - "Those We have given the Scripture recognize this 'Prophet' as they recognize their own children. Yet a group of them hides the truth knowingly (Quran 2:146)." The analogy is of interest, as, just as they recognise their own lineage (and the connotations that they associate with it), so to do they understand the implications of the arrival of an Arabian Prophet, upon the model of Semitic Prophethood, combining both within him the ministry of prophethood and the role of political leader/ruler.

And, above all, it poses a fundamental problem, or issue, for the Jewish narrative about being chosen by God. Whether or not one agrees with the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), there is no doubting that he is one of the great men of history. Furthermore, the Quran asserts him as being "the final Prophet"(see Quran 33:40). Whether or not one agrees with this theological point, one can still understand from this an important historical point - that the Arabian Prophet is from the Last Major successful claimants to Prophethood from the Semitic peoples.

In many ways, he is an exception within the, as well as a continuation of the tradition of semitic prophethood. For he is an Arab, whereas the majority of the Prophets, historically, have been Israelites. And this poses an issue. For the Last Major Prophetic figure, within the Semitic Context, to be an Arab, and not an Israelite, poses an issue for the Jewish Narrative. It is an unsettling, and startling reality to come to terms within this framework.

Of course, there have been differing Jewish responses to the Prophet from their cousin tribe. Historically, whilst being a minority view, some Jewish Rabbis have said that the Prophet was one for the Arabs, but not necessarily for the Jews (Mulla Ali Al-Qari discusses this view in his Sharh Fiqh Al-Akbar). Most Jews do not accept his Prophecy. There were certain notable figures from the Jews during the Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) time who accepted the faith, such as Abdullah bin Salam, who is reported as being the leading or chief Rabbi of Medina at the time.

Now, we can see how certain teachings, within the Islamic corpus, seem to demonstrate this Divine Favour upon Arabs. A critique thus often posited regarding the Islamic faith is that, despite being a universalist faith, it views the Arabs as superior, or at least, in practice, places a higher moral value on their culture and language. The institutions of warfare, political power and even conquest, coupled with the cultural and religious apparatus, create the conditions not just to unify the Arabs under one banner, but also to engage in expansion, conquest, and essentially, imperialism. (See https://archive.org/details/islam-the-arab-imperialism-anwar-shaikh_202109/mode/2up).

(In all fairness, we may make a distinction between Imperialism in a pre-modern context, and Colonialism in modernity).

Indeed, there was an observable ethnic self-interest in uniting the Arabs into a cohesive force, coupled with a shared belief in one God, via which that prerequisite civilisational vigour (or *Asabiyyah*, to use the Khaldunian term) could be fostered. Indeed, in subsequent empires, such as the Umayyads, we see the mistreatment of non-Arabs. This led to the Abbasid uprising, and one of the main theological convictions behind it was the idea of *Shu'ubiyah* (equality between muslims regardless of race). This was based on verses such as - "O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may 'get to' know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware" (Quran 49:13). However, there have historically been those as well who argued for the superiority of Arabs over Non-Arabs, on the basis of certain teachings within the Islamic Legal Corpus, like the narration I have previously quoted from Sahih Muslim.

There may also be reference to Arabisation, Islamification, or even Turkification in later centuries. Theoretically, the Caliphate is a kind of Multiracial, Multicultural entity, within which islam is the dominant framework, and the basis for the constitution. Thus, beyond race, tribe, and culture, by uniting under one faith. This may be predicated on sidelining other cultures or systems which are antithetical to Islamic teachings.

In the context of Judaism, a critique oft made is that believing God bestowed favour upon the Jewish peoples, and chose them over all peoples, necessitates this kind of belief in the superiority of Jews over non-Jews. Furthermore, with the religion latching on to the ethnic identity, it creates and reinforces this exclusionary attitude even further. Apart from certain biblical teachings, which I have previously cited, there are teachings from other faiths which invite much critique and objection.

Typically, we can find these teachings within works, such as in the Talmud:

"Bava Metiza 114b:2 "As it is taught in a baraita: Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai says that the graves of gentiles do not render one impure, as it is stated: "And you, My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, are man" (Ezekiel 34:31), which teaches that you, i.e., the Jewish people, are called "man," but gentiles are not called "man."

"The best of gentiles should be killed." (TJ, Kid. 4:11, 66c)

(See

https://open.substack.com/pub/untoages/p/heres-what-the-talmud-really-says?r=5rk265&utm_campaign=post-expanded-share&utm_medium=post%20viewer).

In terms of both these faiths, what we do have to realise, is that despite these passages, or teachings, which may be considered or understood to be problematic, there is a lot of context and explanation that goes behind them. Of course, whether or not one agrees with them, one can still attempt to understand this context. At the same time, we can note how these teachings have been used (or misused) to justify certain acts - this is where, arguably, the role of interpretation becomes important. For everybody has an interpretation of religious texts, whether they like it or not. Even Literalism , or Scripturalism, is an interpretive lens predicated on a set of assumptions (e.g. the intent of the speaker is literal).

As for the Talmud:

“The Talmud is the textual record of generations of rabbinic debate about law, philosophy, and biblical interpretation, compiled between the 3rd and 8th centuries and structured as commentary on the Mishnah with stories interwoven. The Talmud exists in two versions: the more commonly studied Babylonian Talmud was compiled in present-day Iraq, while the Jerusalem Talmud was compiled in Israel.” (<https://www.sefaria.org/texts/Talmud>) .

Of course, naturally, there will be incredibly problematic opinions in regards to certain jurisprudential discussions. However, there is no reason to assume that these are authoritative opinions shared by all Jews or all of Jewish scholarship. Furthermore, it may ignore important nuances that have important legal and theological implications. For example, regarding the first quote shared - this may be understood in a specific ritual context or category. Thus, the specific term “adam” here may be in terms of a specific legal category, but not necessarily saying that Gentiles simply aren’t human. As for the second, it may be understood in the context of war or conflict.

Furthermore, Judaism being latched onto Jewish Ethnic identity means certain religious responsibilities and duties being given to a certain group. It does not necessitate an ultra-exclusionary attitude in and of itself. Furthermore, God choosing a people with a specific covenant, does not necessitate superiority over all others.

In terms of the Islamic Faith, whilst the Arabs may have received certain favours by God, it does not necessitate an overall superiority of Arabs over Non-Arabs. Rather, this may simply be a kind of partial virtue (in terms of certain attributes or virtues which have been granted to the Arabs from God). This does not necessitate Arab Supremacism. Even if the Arabs have been granted specific favours of God in certain ways, then the other races have all also been granted gifts from the Divine which they have not been granted - thus, God may have granted certain nations a degree of partial superiority over others in certain attributes or aspects of their society. However, in an overall, holistic sense, insofar as goes their shared essence, they are one - one humanity before God.

We also see certain religious teachings, advancing this idea of equality -

“ At-Tirmidhi (3270) narrated from Ibn ‘Umar that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) addressed the people on the day of the conquest of Makkah and said: “O people, verily Allah has taken away from you the arrogance of Jaahiliyyah and its pride in forefathers. People are of two types: righteous and pious, who are dear to Allah, and doomed evildoers, who are insignificant before Allah. People are the descendants of Adam, and Allah created Adam from dust. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): ‘O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted’ [al-Hujuraat 49:13].” Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh at-Tirmidhi.

Ahmad (22978) narrated from Abu Nadrah: Someone who heard the khutbah of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) on the second of the days of at-Tashreeq told me that he said: “O people, verily your Lord is One and your father is one.

Verily there is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab or of a non-Arab over an Arab, or of a red man over a black man, or of a black man over a red man, except in terms of taqwa. Have I conveyed the message?" They said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) has conveyed the message.

Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in as-Saheehah (6/199) “

(See

<https://islamqa.info/en/answers/182686/is-the-arab-muslim-better-than-the-non-arab-muslim>).

We also see the example of companions such as Salman The Persian, and Bilal the Ethiopian, who were from amongst the closest companions to the Prophet (Peace be upon him). Regarding Salman, the Prophet is reported as having said "If Faith were at (the place of) Ath-Thuraiya (pleiades, the highest star), even then (some men or man from these people (i.e. Salman's folk) would attain it." (See <https://sunnah.com/bukhari:4897>) . This could be considered a kind of partial virtue the Prophet is describing regarding the Persians, even over the Arabs.

On a historical level, whilst the early Islamic conquests were primarily carried out by Arabs, their conviction, naturally, was a universalist one. Furthermore, we gradually see throughout Islamic history, other ethnic groups coming to dominate, such as the Persians and the Turks. It would not be too much to say that the Persians eventually came to intellectually dominate Islam. Some of the greatest thinkers and figures in the Islamic tradition, such as “The Leading Scholar of the two Sanctuaries” Al-Juwayni, and “The Proof of Islam” Al-Ghazali, come from Persia. See, for example, Richard W. Bulliet’s work “Islam The View from the Edge”, which details the native development of Islam in the Persian context. Islam, being a universal religion, incorporated within its banner countless different peoples and cultures. Thus, even if certain cultures were sidelined, or certain practices or faiths (wrongly and abhorrently) persecuted, it is important to note that these peoples, in many cases, developed distinctive Islamic identities and cultures of their own, alongside maintaining many of their pre-islamic traditions and customs. In fact, one can even note certain degrees of syncretism, in certain communities, between Islam and other faiths as well.

Unfortunately, there have been historical ethnic conflicts within the Muslim world. In many cases, ideology or sectarian tensions latch onto ethnic divisions. For example, Imami Shi’ism in the Iranian context, which has a distinctive Persian Nationalist and Arab-skeptic slant to it. Or, for example, Wahabi-Salafism in the Khaleeji Arab context, including the historical background of revolt and rebellion against Ottoman authority. However, Islam does have the ability to operate across ethnic and cultural lines. At the same time, Muslims have managed to at times co-operate and unite across ethnic lines, including organising and reorganising under the banner of one empire or another. Yet, history is never all sunshines and rainbows, and conflict and infighting along these different lines is just part of the story. Not just of Islamic history, but of Human history more broadly...

Of course, in reality, religion, in particular the organised kind, is spread, at least on a political level, via conquest and political power. Thus, “Islam being spread through the sword” has an element of truth in it. Especially pre-modernity, leaders and rulers were patrons of different faiths. Even in terms of the mainstream stands of Islam, we very quickly realise that they required political patronage. The Asharis could not have spread without assistance from the

Seljuks and others who would be patrons for their cause, such as Salahudeen Al-Ayyubi. (See https://youtu.be/0RtikV6PG2M?si=WwF_PZtNPTOjAsWO). Imami Shi'ism wouldn't have taken hold of Persia without the Safavids. (See *The Great Empires of Asia* edited by Jim Masselos). This goes for pretty much every single faith. Paganism was patronised by the Romans, Ancient Greeks, etc. Yet, eventually the Romans would come to patronize Christianity, thus facilitating its spread across its lands. Of course, for the first three centuries or so, Christians were persecuted by the Romans. And yet, ironically, a time would come when Christians would begin persecuting Pagans - the persecuted becoming the persecutors, the oppressed becoming the oppressed... (See <https://youtu.be/9w4AQ6ffmqM?si=v5P0zTBciHe5-sUf>).

At the same time, many of these religions, in and of themselves, were gradual organic developments. On the individual level, many people actively believed in, practised, and contributed to the development of these faiths. In fact, in many cases, religion, in particular the organised kind, has been used to resist state tyranny, oppression, or what they see as injustice. It also inspires in many strong group identity and resistance in the face of strong external pressures. Like mentioned, Christians were persecuted for the first 300 years of their existence. Even when we discuss the Catholic Church - whilst they absolutely were corrupt in many cases, involved in various power struggles, the Catholic church was perhaps the only major institution to keep learning and culture alive during Europe's Dark Ages (<https://youtu.be/nbhpUjXAfrM?si=E20UliFJcrATFqXW>). Christianity also played an important role in countering the brutalistic aspects of Roman, and Indo-Aryan European warrior culture at the time. Indeed, the humanitarian teachings of Christianity serve as an important check on the broader European psyche. Not to mention, that many of the teaching about the importance of the individual stem from Christian teachings (e.g. being created in the image of God).

In the case of Islam, we realise very quickly that the ideas of Jihad can in fact inspire resistance to tyranny and as self-defence - "Permission 'to fight back' is 'hereby' granted to those being fought, for they have been wronged.¹ And Allah is truly Most Capable of helping them 'prevail'. (Quran 22:39) ." Of course, there are also teachings which suggest that Jihad is aggressive - "Fight those who do not believe in Allah and the Last Day, nor comply with what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden, nor embrace the religion of truth from among those who were given the Scripture, until they pay the tax, willingly submitting, fully humbled." (Quran 9:29). In truth, there is a nuance and complex understanding of the nature of Jihad - although most of the initial battles which the Prophet engaged in were defensive, there were certain expeditions which the Prophet engaged in, or he ordered, which were pre-emptive or aggressive in nature. The Arab expansions and conquests were, of course, in an age of empire, where political power was predicated on this kind of imperialism. The typical understandings of the institution of Jihad as aggressive as well as defensive helped to legitimise this early expansionism.

Of course, with the primary organisation of society being based on Religion, there is the concept of Dhimmis. Either one fights till death, submits to Islam, or pays the Jizya and accepts the Muslim rule. Naturally, this may be criticised as subordinating those of different faiths as a secondary class in comparison to Muslims. It is important to note, theoretically, that these groups have a right to practise their own faith as long as they accept the political settlement of the Muslims. Of course, this would not be in the same sense as we understand

it in a western liberal model. We thus see even during the Ottoman period how they had the “millet system”, where the Jews and Christians had their own courts, for example. This status was extended to Zoroastrians as well, often based on a narration from the Prophet, as narrated by Abdur Rahman bin Awf (See <https://sunnah.com/tirmidhi:1587>). They often did face systemic discrimination and persecution as well. In certain cases, their cultural artifacts, books, and buildings were destroyed. Many Zoroastrians decided to migrate to India, where they came to be known as “Parsi”. Many others converted to Islam. In many cases, they were given relative autonomy to practise the faith as long as they accepted the Muslim political settlement, and transgressions against the Zoroastrian community and their holy sites were even punished at times. (See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution_of_Zoroastrians#Rashidun_Caliphate) .

As for Polytheists or Pagans, there is a debate regarding whether the dhimmi status extended to them. In other words, would they pay the jizya, or would they be fought unless they accepted Islam. 2 of the 4 jurisprudential schools (the Hanafis and Malikis) extended the dhimmi status to non-Arab polytheists, but not to Arab ones. The other 2 (Shafi and Hanbali) didn’t extend it to either. It is important to note that most Jurists believed that most, if not all Arabs, had embraced Islam during the Prophet’s lifetime, hence, the command to fight them held little practical significance. This also comes back to the point that there was a fundamental interest in uniting the Arabs under a single banner (connected by a shared faith and ethnic identity). In terms of historical practice, the Dhimmi status was extended to Pagans out of expediency, such as to Hindus. Unfortunately, certain distinctive groups were still targeted/persecuted at different points in history. (See *Islamic Political Thought: An Introduction*, edited by Gerhard Bowering, P.127-8, and *Sharia:Theory, Practice, Transformation* by Wael B.Hallaq).

Even with Christianity, typically, there was also an understanding of “Just War Theory”. For example, take a verse of the Bible like - “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.” (Matthew 10:34-36). However, at the same time, we note some of Christ’s (quite radical) teachings, which may in fact go against such notions - “But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. “ (Matthew 5:39).

Of course, in the context of ancient Judaism, as per the Old Testament narrative, they would have engaged in conquest, and at times, even genocide of the native peoples of the Holy Land (See Steven Pinker’s “The Better Angels of our Nature”). The commandments to slaughter Amalek, for example - (1 Samuel 15:3) “ Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy[a] all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.” However, at the same time, the Old Testament has, of course, forbidden Murder. As part of the Ten Commandments, it states “You shall not murder”. This is not to justify or defend the above, but to point out that this is not a universal command - indeed, the general prohibition on murder would still remain, with the above being in the context of conquest. Indeed, such teachings can be used to justify horrific acts, but religious teachings may also be used to inspire resistance to tyranny and persecution. In the context of the Jews, despite the persecution and oppression they have faced throughout their history, they have retained their religious traditions and

ethnic identity, thus allowing them to maintain strong group cohesion in the face of such external pressure. It is a shame that the genocide of Jews during the Holocaust has been weaponised to justify the genocide of the Palestinians, which shows one of the great ironies of history - that an oppressed group, once they attain power, can become an oppressor...

In the case of Islam, there was an initial great flourishing of learning which took place. In fairness, and to include some important nuance here, there were always those, and those who continue to be, skeptical or against attempts to learn about other cultures or traditions, particularly those which had elements of polytheism and disbelief in them. Yet at the same time, there is no denying that many, many figures within the broader Islamic tradition sought to learn and study these various cultures and traditions. In fact, it was precisely their faith that inspired them to study these traditions.

The difficult yet nuanced point to be made here, is that both of these views have their basis within certain Islamic teachings.

Of course, Islam critiques Polytheism and Disbelief. It asserts that it is the completed, final message of God for all of mankind. As such, its scriptures are sufficient for the guidance of mankind, and to delve into other faiths is only to open the door to doubt and uncertainty - thus, it is better to close the door to uncertainty, and to prevent the floodgates from being opened, which may spiral, if not careful, to disbelief. "Part of the perfection of one's Islam is his leaving that which does not concern him." [Tirmidhi]. (See <https://40hadithnawawi.com/hadith/12-leaving-that-which-does-not-concern-you/>). And (<https://sunnah.com/nasai:5711>) 'Leave that which makes you doubt for that which does not make you doubt.'

However, there is in fact more nuance to this discussion than just that. First of all, there is a general encouragement to learning and rationalism within the Islamic tradition - "Do you not think?" (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:44) "Will you not then ponder?" (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:219). (See <https://medium.com/@howtomuslimnow/why-the-quran-asks-us-to-ponder-887553b168fb>).

Yes, there are requirements to believe in certain tenets of the faith, and there are acknowledgements of the limits of the Intellect and the Human faculties - "Say, "Who is more knowledgeable: you or Allah?" (Quran 2:140). In organised/institutional religion, this may translate into this kind of dogmatism, or even zealotry or blind-following. Yet, at the same time, the Quran has in fact asserted the rational basis for religious creed, grounded in sure knowledge - "So, know 'well, O Prophet,' that there is no god 'worthy of worship' except Allah." (Quran 47:19).

Furthermore, there is a general recommendation to learn - " And the superiority of the scholar over the worshiper is like the superiority of the moon over the rest of the celestial bodies. Indeed the scholars are the heirs of the Prophets, and the Prophets do not leave behind Dinar or Dirham. The only legacy of the scholars is knowledge, so whoever takes from it, then he has indeed taken the most able share." — Jami` at-Tirmidhi 2682. Despite, generally speaking, being considered specifically in reference to religious knowledge, the general virtue of seeking knowledge can be extended to all types of knowledge. "When a person dies, his deeds are cut off except for three: Continuing charity, knowledge that others

benefited from, and a righteous son who supplicates for him.” — Jami` at-Tirmidhi 1376.

(See

<https://medium.com/@hasan.hameed/virtues-of-acquiring-knowledge-in-the-light-of-hadeeth-f319b106f1e3>).

In fact, there is a fundamental issue with dividing knowledge into "religious" and "secular/worldly". In reality, there is a kind of inherent virtue in seeking any form of knowledge - one can bring about immense benefits by studying any form of knowledge, regardless of its nature. Furthermore, deep reflection and pondering within these various sciences and disciplines can ultimately lead to an appreciation of the creation of God, which facilitates belief in him. Furthermore, with certain disciplines, there can be nuance as to whether or not they are considered as "religious" or "worldly" - such as History, which does have a kind of religious virtue contained within its study as well. (See *Nusoos Mukhtarah min Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldun* by Dr. Muhammad Abdah).

Which brings me on to another point - we do not live in a vacuum. Naturally, we will engage with certain ideas, pieces of art, which we will not fully agree with and will find problems with. However, it is not enough to shut our eyes to it and pretend it is not there. Being the "Divine Representative" on earth charges us with actively engaging with people, ideas, and traditions. By doing so, we can appreciate, learn about, and benefit from certain aspects of those things, even if we don't fully agree with it.

“ “The wise word is the lost property of the believer. Wherever they find it, they are most deserving of it.” [This is the wording of Imam Tirmidhi.] “.

(<https://seekersguidance.org/answers/hadith/hadith-philosophy-authentic/>). Hence, wisdom is to be, and can be found, in any tradition. In fact, other traditions can have important insights that one's own tradition may overlook or not emphasise. By learning about these different traditions, it may also in fact shine a light on aspects of one's own tradition which are often overlooked.

Take, for example, the following verse of the Quran - “ Have they not travelled throughout the land to see what was the end of those who were ‘destroyed’ before them? They were far superior in number and might and ‘richer in’ monuments throughout the land, but their ‘worldly’ gains were of no benefit to them. (Quran 40:82). “ Thus, the past nations, despite all the differing variables that applied to them - their differences in numbers, riches, or ideas - all went through similar cycles or fates. This verse helps us to acknowledge the differences amongst these various civilisations alongside the similar historical cycles and patterns that occur amongst them all.

Or, for example, take the following verse - “We have revealed to you the Book as an explanation of all things (Quran 16:89).” The full depth and explanation of the Quran, culminating in it being an explanation of all things, can only be fully realised when one has delved into the various disciplines and sciences of mankind, such that he can interpret and understand the indications of the Quran about these different realities to their fullest extent.

Nevertheless, one can understand, that certain teachings from organised/institutional religion can be used to justify atrocities, genocide, state tyranny, etc. It can also be used to facilitate this kind of dogmatism. At the same time, one can note how certain teachings can be used

to facilitate resistance to oppression, or to state tyranny - teachings of justice. How it can be used to challenge blind-following and in fact help in the development of different ideas.

In every religious tradition, there are elements of truth and wisdom to be found. They may emphasise or explain certain things which others overlook. Certain teachings from certain traditions may act as a balance, check, or correction to others. “To each of you We have ordained a code of law and a way of life. If Allah had willed, He would have made you one community, but His Will is to test you with what He has given ‘each of’ you. So compete with one another in doing good. To Allah you will all return, then He will inform you ‘of the truth’ regarding your differences (Quran 5:48)”. Thus, these ethnic, religious, and cultural conflicts are constants within our condition. “Humans will continue to fight one another until the day there’s one human or less” (Quote from Erwin Smith from Attack on Titan).

And yet, there is hope in tragedy. The Divine has sent messengers and inspiration to man across different times and places. These different traditions are constantly developing, by the countless individuals who help shape them. And yet, beneath all the human developments, there may be nuggets of fundamental higher truth. Whilst the religious and spiritual may say this is divinely inspired, those who are not can understand this as fundamental underlying truths understood by the wise and enlightened men and women of humanity. As such, we appreciate these, as the proof of the Divine inspiring individuals across time and place.

The gradual process of these revelations sets the way for the enlightenment of humanity, as they begin to understand and comprehend these fundamental truths, gradually seeking the truth, and by it, the Divine. We journey through the negation, the doubt, up until in existence, itself, until we reach the exception, and finally, the affirmation. We thus seek to grow in knowledge and cognizance of the Divine, the root from which all existence stems, who has inspired individuals with these truths across time and place.

We thus set the world ablaze with the banner of لا اله الا الله.

With the proclamation that there is no God but him, alone worthy of worship.

As Ambassadors and Representatives of his final major message.

From Humanity, To Humanity, For all of Humanity.

Fundamentally unsettled by each other's existence- the Jews and Arabs

Conflicting theological, historical and ethnic claims

The existence of the Arabian Prophet fundamentally unsettling for the Jewish narrative

Islam posits that the Arab Muslims and their followers who come after them (spiritual children) shall inherit the land.

Within the context of Dominant Arab Culture and people, whilst Islam is Universalist in essence.

Radical Empathy:

I begin by quoting an example from Attack on Titan. Armin Arlert is an interesting example, not only of a kind of humanist thought, but also of a kind of Radical Empathy. In fact, he stands in stark contrast from Eren. In fact, his character serves as a counter to Eren's. For whilst Eren saw that the cycle of hate and grief between Eldia and the outside world could only be broken through destroying it, Armin saw that he would not Genocide others, even if they wanted to him - only by fighting for a peaceful future for all of mankind could they break the cycle. In other words, he dared to dream of a world for all of humanity.

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Interestingly, Armin's choice, or thought, is not represented as superior or better to Eren's thought. Or Zeke's thought. Or the Marleyan's thought. The beauty of AOT is in representing these different viewpoints, in the context of history, conflict, and most importantly, in the context of the individuals who develop and adhere to them. It presents the nuance and complexity often missed, and most importantly, to contextualise and humanise, not demonise nor justify.

Nevertheless, Armin may have been partially right in one aspect - humanity may be bound by conflict. Indeed, it is an inherent part of our condition. And yet, we must try to extend our empathy to the "other", understand their story, contextualise them, and indeed, seek a better world for all of humanity. Thus, even if the whole world hates us, we still extend our empathy to them, and we still try to humanise them. In other words, "Radical Empathy".

Profound expressions of this Radical Empathy are to be found in various religious traditions. Thus, we find in the Bible (Matthew 5:44) - "But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you..." We further find in Matthew 5:39 - "If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also."

We find a Hadith narrated by the likes of Ibn Hibban and Abu Yala, that "Behold! There is no faith for one who doesn't have love." In another narration, after the incident of Taif, the Prophet (Peace be upon him) was reported as having said - "O Allah, forgive/guide my people for indeed they don't know." (See <https://dorar.net/hadith/sharh/16706> and the Book "Muhammad, The Messenger of Allah - Mercy for the Creations" by Hakim Muhammad Riaz Ahmad and Mian Muhammad Manzur Ahmad (Author), Abu Asad Muhammad Iqbal (Editor), Hadrat Abu Anees Muhammad Barkat Ali (Foreword)).

The profoundness of these teachings is clear - all too often (through no complete fault of our own), we are bound by the context of the conflict we are embedded in. Thus, the exceptional thing for us to do is to step back from our context, and attempt to understand the "other" - to humanise them, even if they aren't willing to extend the same courtesy to us.

It is to understand the profoundly human nature of these people - the "Human, All Too Human" (so to use Nietzsche's phrase) context into which they are born, which they are raised and based in, and understand these conflicts in light of that.

In other words - we humanise, not dehumanise. Ultimately, they are still accountable for any crimes or evil deeds they did. We can contextualise and humanise, but not defend and justify - we can contextualise whilst still maintaining standards of moral responsibility and accountability. This is very much part of the mysterious, paradoxical nature of man's existence - such cruelty, yet such beauty at the same time.

Such profound love, compassion, and understanding for humanity, that we even see the good, despite the bad. Indeed, beyond the bad, cruel and tragic, the human, very human nature in all this.

The West (Good and Evil), AOT, and Metanarratives

In terms of the Western World, or of a Western Civilisation, how exactly do we define it? It is important to get framing right - civilisations aren't monoliths that remain static, nor are they non-existent entities. They are fluid, developing, constantly changing entities - they are not set in stone, their boundaries constantly changing. What constitutes these is also changing.

In terms of a western world, three distinctive characteristics are normally given - the Christian faith, the Roman legacy, and the Germanic Barbarian identity. There are different historical developments which may or may not have affected the collective psyche of this nation - such as the Enlightenment, the development of different secular humanist ideologies developed upon the basis of this kind of scientific, materialist worldview. At the same time, we can see a lot of conflicts along these lines.

In fact, in many cases, conflicts based on secular ideology often latch onto ethnic/tribal, cultural, religious, and civilisational conflicts. Scratch at the secular ideological surface, and you get many of these underlying conflicts. (Of course, there are many nuances, so take them with a grain of salt).

For example, when noting the Protestant divide, we see a divide between the predominantly Germanic-Nordic Protestant North, and Mediterranean-Latin Catholic South (of course, with a number of exceptions, eg. Irish Catholics). Or, for example, in the Cold War, we see a divide between West and East Europe. Interestingly, many like Huntington and Quigley, have made a distinction between "The West" and "Russian/Slavic Eastern Orthodoxy". (See *Tragedy and Hope* (1966) and *Clash Of Civilisations*).

In the modern era, a self-evident example of this is Nationalism. In fact, it is very much a modernist expression of the tribalist sentiment or tendency natural for many humans, based within the context of a modern framework (such as being grounded in the Enlightenment project). Hence, within a nation-state model which emphasises the organisation of the state around a majority host group nation, with a shared culture, language, etc.

Nationalism is, what I would term, the "dark horse" of the political spectrum. Initially, in comparison to the other ideologies of the time, it was a left-wing ideology. And yet, it gradually shifted to becoming an ideology of the Right. Eric Hobsbawm discusses this in his work *"Age of Empire 1875 - 1914"*. He also mentioned that nationalism tends to be "drunk as a cocktail" (i.e in combination with one or more political ideologies, such as socialism, anti-colonialism, religious or secular, etc).

Interestingly, if you have read or studied a lot of Western Nationalist Right-Wing thought, you very quickly realise that many of them are quite liberal, or libertarian. They support things like liberal-democracy, classical liberalism, free markets, etc (at least in theory). In the case of many, though not all, western reactionaries, their conceptions of a western "tradition" tends to be one of an individualistic, intellectually open and pluralistic, high trust society

(what some may term as “Weird”. Essentially, this kind of idealised 1950’s styled liberal homogenous society.

There is a belief that other ethnic groups, steeped in their own traditions, history and identity, share different cultural frame of reference, and hence don’t buy into the “Western story”. Furthermore, they would assert that they have their own ethnic self-interests separate from the host ethnic majority. They would argue that there is a kind of natural, organic immigration of a very small group who assimilate into the dominant culture.

One critique is that those of an immigrant background tend to gradually assimilate into the dominant cultural frame of reference over generations. (See <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11577-023-00887-2> and <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0037768620948478>). They gradually adopt the secular values of the broader western society. Furthermore, whilst they may retain distinctive religious and cultural identities, they may simultaneously identify with their host identity - what gives rise to dual identities. For example, Beck discusses the concept of Binary Ethnic identities (<https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/back-1996-hybrid-identities-culture-identity-a-level-sociology?srltid=AfmBOoqKdLbTKapTWEw1Jay7eaJkgn0ALszet4SFX8k-GLvsp5kdnDwc>). Mirza discusses British Muslim identity, and most of them being well integrated into British culture (<https://www.studysmarter.co.uk/explanations/social-studies/cultural-identity/ethnic-identity/>).

We see how Liberalism, or even other Western ideologies, have been used historically, (and continues to be used so), to justify things like Imperialism and Neo-Imperialism. “The White Man’s Burden” was built upon the logic of “civilising” the natives of various lands across the world, under the guise of a superior or more civilised way of life. The justification of slavery, colonialism, and of some of the worst atrocities against humanity, in many cases under the guise of ideological or political justification. (<https://youtu.be/Vjt51bMHnXA?si=qBEk2VQLW3oNqbfU>).

Yes, at the same time, we may say that some of these ideas have also sowed the seeds for improvements in the quality of life of people globally. The realisation of certain rights, certain liberties, and such. As such, it was within the West that the abolition of slavery took root. Western ideas sowed the seeds for addressing and challenging Western crimes. In fact, in what is a great irony of history, the conquered owed much to the legacy of the imperialists for their liberty. One notes of ideas or ideologies such as Nationalism, Marxism, and Anti-Colonialism, which are of a distinctively Western origin. (Y.N Harari makes this point in his work “Sapiens”. Also see Steven Pinker’s “The Better Angels of our Nature” and Whatifalthists <https://youtu.be/EBLq9gHBtcc?si=rljenrGvZtwickEH>).

Yet, perhaps, just as proportionally it has done a great amount of good in the world, so too has it proportionally done a great amount of evil. The relative success and prosperity of the Western nations has come at the cost of the suffering of millions across the globe, and even of immiseration of those at home.

"The apathy and indifference of people in the Western World to the suffering, torture, misery, bondage and death of millions and millions of people around the world in the years ahead may be one of the greatest tragedies of the twenty first century. "
(The Introduction to Dr Carroll Quigley's, *Tragedy and Hope* (1966)).

"Since 1980, the workers have lost between 6 and 8 percent, around \$6 trillion a year, and the levels of poverty worldwide have been growing. According to a 2024 report from the World Bank Group, 8.5 per cent of the world population lives in extreme poverty, while around 3.5 billion people, or 44 per cent of the global population live on less than \$6.85 per day. (The Classics of Marxism, V.1, P.xii)."

Thus, even if in absolute terms, Capitalism may have raised the wealth of people across the world, thus making the pie bigger for everyone, in relative terms, billions still remain in poverty - 1% of mankind having more than the 99%. This isn't merely in the context of a vacuum, but rather in the context of a system with certain structural inequalities, which systematically prevents the raising of living standards for many.

These structural inequalities and unaccounted factors, in fact, create the conditions for an unfreeze, rather than free, market. A monopoly of a few big corporations prevents a genuinely free market, due to very sizable barriers to entry.

At the same time, one may note that the other major secular humanist ideologies have also, in many cases, caused immense suffering for people. The Marxist, Communist nations have also done their fair share of oppression, chasing the misery of millions as well

(Carroll Quigley, *Tragedy and Hope* (1966)): "Communism in Russia alone required, according to Bolshevik thinkers, that the country must be industrialized with breakneck speed, whatever the waste and hardships, and must emphasize heavy industry and armaments, rather than rising standards of living.... The high speed of industrialisation in the period 1926-1940 was achieved by a merciless oppression of the rural community in which millions of peasants lost their lives".

" He (Voline) comments that this system did not lead "towards socialism" but into state capitalism, "even more abominable than private capitalism" and just "another mode of domination and exploitation". It was the same story in communist factories, in which the dehumanising production-boosting Taylorism used in the West was wrapped up in workerist propaganda and rolled out as Stakhanovism... Quigley writes: "By the middle 1930's the search for 'saboteurs' and for 'enemies of the state' became an all-enveloping mania which left hardly a family untouched. "Hundreds of thousands were killed, frequently on completely false charges, while millions were arrested and exiled to Siberia or put into huge slave-labor camps"... The communist regime effectively amounted, as Voline spells out, to a "totalitarian capitalist state". " (See the Work "The False Red Flag" by Paul Cudeneac).

Thus doesn't even begin to scratch at the surface of Fascism and its subsequent ideologies such as Nazism - making, essentially, an Idol or God out of the State (See <https://youtu.be/XjNZkbWuh9k?si=QZYwBR7JGA1iKuGE>). An ideology which engaged in race pseudo-science, as a cover and justification for its heinous atrocities, culminating in genocide and great tragedies, crimes against humanity such as in the form of the Holocaust.

Do I agree with any or all of this? No. No, I do not. I have discussed the issues with exclusionary ideologies in the past. This Us and Them, In-group and Out-group, the idea of the “Other”. It is the source of much, if not all, conflict. Ultimately, it creates the conditions for radicalisation, polarisation, exclusion, and more. The fundamental issue that must be acknowledged is the use of ideological justification. That is, how ideology can be used to justify and legitimate, and how this may be a direct product of inherent aspects of ideology. These are not just merely arbitrary or theoretical - they have resulted, in many, many cases, in destructive conflicts that have killed millions. And yet, just because these conflicts do exist, doesn't mean they ought to. We don't have to decontextualise, dehumanise, or non-humanise. It does not make it morally, philosophically, or objectively right.

An issue thus arises with many traditionalists, reactionaries, etc. They reproduce certain hierarchies or systems for their own sake, thus replicating the exclusionary, othering conditions for these conflicts to occur. In the grand scale of history, we see how these conflicts have emerged, how they have played out, how they have given way to other conflicts.

Frankly, reality, and more specifically, history, is complex and nuanced. We can contextualise and humanise, without legitimising and justifying. In many cases, when we look back, we see the strengths/weaknesses of both or multiple groups involved. There are many great ironies to history - the persecutor can become the persecuted, the oppressed become the oppressor.

It is thus quite ironic, really, like existence itself is one giant mystery, waiting to be unravelled... Indeed, there is a degree of mystery/hiddenness to it all... We may not fully know/grasp it, at least completely or entirely.

There is a rather pessimistic quote from Nietzsche that I would quote here:

“ So, too, it will not be admitted that all for which men sacrificed life and happiness in former centuries was nothing but delusion: perhaps it is alleged these things were degrees of truth. But what is really meant is that, if a person sincerely believes a thing and has fought and died for his faith, it would be too unjust if only delusion had inspired him. Such a state of affairs seems to contradict eternal justice. For that reason the heart of a sensitive man pronounces against his head the judgement: between moral conduct and intellectual insights there must always exist an inherent connection. It is, unfortunately, otherwise, for there is no eternal justice. “ (“Human, All Too Human, A Book For Free Spirits” by Nietzsche, Harvey).

The Manga/Anime Attack on Titan does a good job representing this. These intractable ethnic/civilisational/cultural/religious (etc) conflicts, steeped in thousands of years of history. Hence, those involved in these conflicts are bound by and based in conflict. Naturally, these will latch onto ideology, and in fact ideology will be influenced by these underlying realities. Naturally, there are those who seek peace and resolution beyond these conflict lines. But there are those who are quite tribalistic in their thought - they want their side to win. Not only to win, but to crush the “other”.

Was Marley wrong to fear the Rumbling? No

Was Eldia wrong to fear its annihilation? No

Was the alliance wrong to seek peace between Eldia and the outside world? No

Attack on Titan artistically and beautifully portrays how all these factions are not merely “devils of the island” or “our enemies across the sea”. Rather, these are real human beings, with very real, human reasons as to why they believe in what they believe in.

Conflict is an inherent, lasting, and inevitable part of our condition. As Erwin Smith says in AOT- “Even if there were two people left, they would still fight”.

We further see how historical narratives are constructed to justify ideology, upon which one can justify the worst crimes of all. Eren Kruger's statement is quite profound - “ The only truth about this world is that there is no truth.” Whilst having obvious postmodernist undertones to it, Kruger's statement is more so in reference to narratives that are constructed, and how they are used as propaganda tools by states to justify and legitimate their actions. We see this in his follow up statement, that all it takes is for people to believe someone is a Devil or a God for them to be so (i.e. for them to be understood as such in the popular conscience)...

These differences, up till a certain point, may be arbitrary or theoretical, yet they are also very real. In truth, whilst ethnicities and tribes are real, they are not concrete or monolithic. Rather, they are constantly changing and evolving, fluid categories. Furthermore, the claims or ideas advanced on the basis of that reality are more theoretical and abstract claims, not biological realities or absolute truths about how society should be run or organised.

These broader philosophical, religious, cultural, ideological (etc) frameworks require us to buy into these grand stories, these “metanarratives” (a term used by postmodernists such as Lyotard and Lyon). A similar way to frame it is the idea of discourses (as developed by the likes of Foucault and Butler).

If we do not buy into the fundamental assumptions of these “metanarratives”, upon which they are based, then they fall apart. This extends to the various secular humanist ideologies, organised religions, philosophies and systems of thought, etc. Or, the various narratives people construct around their identities or history. With this collapse, comes the collapse of the very conditions for these conflicts.

The Subversion of true Spiritual Hierarchy - The Hierarchy of the Market as a break from Tradition

“O Shu’aib! Does your prayer command you that we should abandon what our forefathers worshipped or give up managing our wealth as we please?... They threatened, “O Shu’aib! We do not comprehend much of what you say, and surely we see you powerless among us. Were it not for your clan, we would have certainly stoned you, for you are nothing to us.” He said, “O my people! Do you have more regard for my clan than for Allah, turning your back on Him entirely? Surely my Lord is Fully Aware of what you do.” (Quran 11:87-92).

Implicit within these verses are a few key important points. Yet most prominent amongst them is as follows - The hierarchy of the merchant/propertied class, or one which is merely grounded in tribalism/lineage, subverts true spiritual hierarchy, instead of a genuine hierarchy grounded in the transcendental, in obedience to the Divine. What many western conservatives, and those who follow them, may overlook, is that the hierarchy of the market inbuilt into capitalism constitutes a fundamental break from “tradition”.

This is an important point, as it helps us to frame, to a certain extent, many of the conversations surrounding Capitalism. In particular, one common critique that one will hear from leftists, such as Marxists, and their Feminist/Liberation adjacent groups, is that Capitalism reproduces certain “traditional” institutions, such as those of marriage, and the monogamous nuclear family. And in a sense, they are not wrong. And yet, an important nuance that both the left and the right miss, is that Capitalism does reproduce these institutions, and yet it simultaneously sows the seeds for their breakdown and destruction.

This is insofar as it is within the interests of capital to reproduce, destroy, or retain them in a weakened form. As such, the breakdown of many traditional institutions over the past few decades in our contemporary society is a direct product of (late-stage) capitalism. Indeed, it is the natural conclusion of this kind of Liberal model within the Western world, which seeks to “maximise individual liberty”. It thus, by its very nature, necessitates such break downs. This is further coupled with Capitalism, which, in the pursuit of profit, will facilitate these breakdowns if need be. Indeed, instead of people relying on traditional family structures and communal networks, you get them to rely on corporations and private or government run, bureaucratic institutions. Insofar as we have the interests of the Capitalist class, this will mean more workers for you, who are reliant upon you for work, which has second order effects, such as lower individual salaries, due to increased supply despite retaining the same demand. This also inevitably leads to an expansion of bureaucracy for its own sake, as positions are created on paper, which have little marginal productive value besides the illusion of working.

However, in truth, this process of breakdown, and more broadly, disembedding, has been a continuous process, and reality of, modern industrial societies. In the same vein, monogamous nuclear families became disembedded from extended family networks, due to the fundamental nature of modern industrial capitalist societies, due to the requirements of social and geographical mobility (See Parsons Functional Fit theory). This entails the breakdown of the extended and communal networks.

This is a kind of “contradiction”, to play into the Marxist perspective here, where the seeds of destruction of these institutions are sown by the very system which may have intended to reproduce and preserve them. For Marxists, they may correctly identify the problem, but the solution they offer is not necessarily correct. What they may end up getting wrong is advocating for the abolition of such institutions in a revolution.

In reality, Capitalism takes for granted the prerequisite social stability provided for by these traditional institutions, which creates the conditions of an innovative, competitive market, where the Capitalist model can thrive. However, it inevitably sows the seeds of destruction for these institutions, whereby it can not guarantee their survival, and henceforth, the survival of its own system, which is already predicated upon this prerequisite stability.

Hence, it is precisely the onward march of capital, in the endless pursuit of profit, which creates the conditions for the destruction of these institutions. Thus, simply abolishing them is merely taking this logic and process to its logical conclusion. Indeed, this may inevitably reflect a common critique of Marxists and Communists from the Marxist tradition from their left - that they inevitably devolve into a form of “Authoritarian State Capitalism”, simply solidifying power under a single bureaucratic class who own the means of production. Having, let us say, a communist state which abolishes these institutions in a grand revolution would be the natural move, for what in reality would be, an “Authoritarian Capitalist” state, which merely accelerated the destructive processes and logic of Modern Industrial Capitalism, to its logical conclusion.

Rather, a possible solution to this predicament is not revolution, but restoration. Restoration of the institution of family and marriage within the context of extended/communal networks. Within a western context, this would mean retaining the nuclear family but within the context of extended and/or communal networks. In context, one would also emphasise Individualism, Individual liberty, the rights and inherent honour and value of the individual, as properly operationalised within the context of societal rights and responsibilities/duty as well, in relation to one’s family and community.

The Forces Of Universalisation and Particularisation

The gradual trend from Particularism to Universalism:

On a historical level, we can notice a gradual developmental trend towards larger and larger units of social organisation, as mentioned by Y.N Harari mentions in his work "Sapiens". Arguably, this process had been facilitated by the Axial Age and its faiths/systems of thought.

Thus, we notice that many of the particularist faiths tend to be pagan/polytheistic faiths. However, with the Axial Age, and the gradual movement towards monotheistic faiths, we have a movement towards universalism. Or, at the very least, they tend towards larger forms of social organisation. This is whilst Pagan faiths tend to be particular to tribal or ethnic identities.

One critique that may be voiced is that Polytheistic faiths tend to be more pluralistic, insofar as they can accommodate for different faiths exclusive to different groups of people, thus retaining their unique traditions for each group of people. And there is an element of truth here. In the case of the Romans, we see how they could synthesise different Pagan mythologies, under the view that "God X of people Y is basically just our God Z". However, you couldn't say so for Christianity, for example - "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20:3-5). (Although, Christianity may have co-opted many aspects of paganism when it was adopted by the Romans). (See <https://youtu.be/nbhpUjXAfRM?si=JNyCx2hp1TTxgO2S> and <https://youtu.be/9w4AQ6ffmqM?si=xy2bki0DBt7II5-A>).

At the same time, this pluralism is predicated on this kind of particularism, which can simultaneously, also lead to exclusionary attitudes. This can create supremacist attitudes, or attitudes where ignorance of the other is glorified. Furthermore, what this may not account for is that polytheistic societies (at least, in the ancient world) tend to be quite hierarchical within that society - within the context of these societies, there tends to be low social mobility, with a quite rigid and segregated class system. (See <https://youtu.be/G41XQ2GGgA4?si=RCVdWVDy2LfC46v7>).

Monotheism, when coupled with universalism, can be both pluralist and exclusionary. Insofar as it identifies an out-group on the basis of faith or religion, and yet simultaneously, due to its universal nature, will cut across cultural, ethnic, civilisational, and even sectarian lines.

We can give three distinctive examples in the context of the main Semitic faiths:

In terms of the Pagan faiths, we may take a look at Hinduism, itself a product of this unifying process. We see the gradual amalgamation and collation of various traditions of the various Indian peoples. As a form of unifying identity in the Indian context, especially within the

modern era, it has had a unique development in Indian history. For example, we see in Nanda's study of Hinduism in India how the new Indian middle class have retained a strong Hindu identity and practice despite their new accumulated wealth (which may traditionally have been seen as at odds with Hinduism's ascetic teachings, see <https://youtu.be/J0weV1sdo8U?si=uohWIVH76VFiYsVL>). We also see the case of modernist reformist movements, which attempt to reinterpret and reevaluate scripture in a modernist context. An important example of this is the Arya Samaj movement (<https://share.google/7lyvA3TM9ufZay5WL> and <https://share.google/eGWNPS3GHxbdOYubM>).

In the context of the forces of Universalisation and Particularisation, it creates the conditions for this kind of dialectic. Despite successful particularist reactions at certain points of history, there has been a gradual historical trend towards larger and larger units of social organisation over the course of history. In modernity, this force or process of universalisation has intensified, particularly in the form of globalisation.

Arguably, the various secular humanist ideologies have a role to play here. For many, the present this kind of picture of what the ideal, universal form of governance should look like, whether it be the liberal-capitalist democratic, communist, or fascist models. Arguably, all of them have incorporated within them certain utopian visions regarding what the world should look like, whilst also having to acknowledge ground reality and cater the application of their ideologies to it. (See Steven Pinker's "Better Angels of our Nature", Paul Johnson's "Modern Times", Huntington's "Clash of Civilisations").

Western Imperialism has a necessary role to play here too. Its globe-encompassing nature, where goods and services were traded across the world, created the prerequisite conditions for globalism in our current era. Even before that, the imperium and conquests of the Muslims, as well as the tendency of the Chinese civilisation towards large (what may be considered as "authoritarian") states after periods of disunity and civil strife, that encompassed huge swathes of east Asia, created the conditions for a kind of proto-globalism, where trade was facilitated across vast swathes of land and sea via sailing merchants, and via routes such as the Silk Road. Indeed, the travels of the likes of Ibn Battuta and Marco Polo bear witness to this kind of proto-globalism that was already in place. The same can be said about the Mongol empire, for example. Indeed, we can see these trade and travel networks between medieval European Christendom, the abode of Islam, China, India, Africa, etc. What many conservatives may ignore or overlook (both the western/non-western kind) is that there is a contradiction between their opposition to globalism, whilst ignoring how imperialism, conquests, or large states from their parts of the world, respectively, created the prerequisite, necessary conditions for globalisation to occur.

Of course, within the modern context, the globe-encompassing nature of Western conquests created the necessary conditions for globalisation to take place. In particular (as many sociologists tend to hold), late modernity, having intensified certain aspects of modernity, has also intensified the processes of globalisation. (See <https://www.hectic-teacher.co.uk/sociology-support/theory-and-methods/tm6-modernity-late-modernity-and-post-modernity>). We see this, not only in technology such as the internet, which can transport ideas and thoughts across the world in the blink of an eye, but also in the form of international or transnational trade, and dealings between nations. Services,

goods, and ideas are transported across the world, across borders, nation-states, and civilisational/ethnic/cultural lines.

Of course, after the collapse of the International Communist Bloc in the aftermath of the Cold War, many, such as Fukuyama, had hypothesised an “End of History” narrative, whereby it had become self-evidently true that liberal-democratic capitalism had won out in the battle of ideologies, and hence now the universal model for governance. Of course, such a hypothesis is being invalidated or falsified in real time, right before our very eyes, and yet, one of the flaws is that it does the all too common thing - it predicates itself upon the criteria or standards of (secular humanist) ideology. It sets this universal standard, yet ignores particularist forces that would challenge such a universal, globalist world order. (See Huntington’s Clash of Civilizations).

Davies has asserted that the Enlightenment (which may extend to the liberal) project is currently under attack. He gives the example of Ultra-Nationalism, during the eventual dissolution of Yugoslavia (See Napier Press A Level Aqa Sociology Textbooks V.1 and V.2). We can also give the example of Fundamentalist Islam. Ironically, although it is reactionary, insofar as it is opposed to externally imposed charges, the story or underlying mythos it has is at odds with a secular humanist paradigm, it does in fact have a global vision of how humanity ought to, or should be, but under a different ideological form. (See Khaled Abou El Fadl’s “The Great Theft”).

We also see the rise in multipolarity as a challenge to unipolarity headed by the United States, due to a decline in American power. This can be seen in the likes of China, Russia, Iran, etc. Multipolarity is still very much a form of globalism, but simply under a different form. It is also important to note that these nations have historical crimes and injustices of their own. In fact, they don’t necessarily have a consistent opposition to imperialism, but rather are opposed to the one doing it and its crimes against their people. (<https://corbettreport.com/the-multipolar-world-order-is-the-new-world-order/>).

We also see increasing nationalistic and isolationist sentiments, signifying a deeper political divide, that between globalism and nativism. These discussions have come to the forefront due to certain issues such as identity, immigration, culture, foreign wars and interventionism, etc. A common critique of globalism is that it erodes native cultures, and inevitably creates a kind of global monoculture. In the past few decades, popular global culture has been dominated by American and, more broadly, western culture, via various media institutions and mediums, such as the TV and Radio.

However, the power of these traditional media institutions has been challenged by the rise of the internet, which has allowed for the increasingly decentralised spread of information, despite attempts at censorship and centralisation. This has allowed for differing forms of expression to thrive. Interestingly, Postman has discussed the breakdown of the information hierarchy between children and adults due to technologies like Television. However, I would extend this to a much broader sense, in the way in which this is currently occurring, due to the internet’s decentralised nature, whereby the traditional institutions of media are losing their relative ability to gatekeep information. Thus, more people have access to different perspectives and information than at any other point of history, and no longer are reliant on a

few traditional institutions. As such, culture, or popular culture, is now more fragmented than ever before.

I have discussed this before regarding the dialectic facilitated by the internet (<https://youtu.be/x0zagXZEQ6A?si=VkxHi2bC0AZT2PRA>). Ironically, whilst the internet wasn't necessarily intended for this, it created the conditions for fragmentation, leading to this simulacra of tribalism (whether in a political, cultural, religious, civilisational, etc kind), which has manifested and translated itself into the real world.

In terms of popular culture, we see recent developments, such as the rise in popularity of East Asian art forms, such as those of Korean and Japanese ones. Even generational differences can be quite stark. When I compare the millennials and Gen Z (based on my personal observations, which may be wrong), I notice there is a kind of cosmopolitan, optimistic, open spirit to many of the Millennials. This is in contrast to the relative pessimism, closed off and isolated nature of many of Gen Z. This may simply be because Gen Z is young and still finding their place in the world, and hence have an inherent insecurity.

This plays out in their political views, where Gen Z is incredibly polarised along political lines - in particular there is a stark contrast between the political beliefs of Gen Z women and Gen Z men, with them shifting leftwards and rightwards respectively. Although at times this may be exaggerated as a conservative or religious revival, it is certainly true that a significant group of Gen Z is quite conservative or reactionary, more open to organised religion, etc, although not necessarily a majority. The Millennials tend to be less religious and more progressive, especially compared to older generations. This can be seen in the "Blue Pill vs Red Pill" divide, the early and mid 2010s being dominated by the "blue pill", whereas the late 2010s and early 2020s saw the rise of the "red pill".

Interestingly enough, a lot of contemporary meme culture is a spawn of the online right. In particular, a lot of meme terminology and basic images/templates come from 4chan. Most memes tend to be right-wing coded. Things like "Chad, Stacy, Chud, Nothing Ever Happens, Wojak, Boomer, Zoomer, Pepe the Frog" etc. Interestingly, leftists and liberals also use these. A lot of people who may critique things that have embedded or internalised xyz will unironically use these right wing coded memes.

Interestingly, the right has primarily been able to organise online, hence the "online right". The last decade and a half has seen an immense period of intellectual dynamism on behalf of the right. There have been a number of important developments and breakthroughs that they have experienced during this time period. We see the phenomena of the "Dark Enlightenment". There has also been a gradual trend amongst the right, from economic conservatism to social conservatism, nationalism and traditionalism. There has also been the awakening of a kind of "civilisational consciousness", and even of "era consciousness" (awareness of our current era of history, and the coming of a new era as the current political settlement is bound to eventually collapse).

We can see this in the divide between MAGA and America First, in particular, symbolised by the figures of Shapiro and Fuentes. The MAGA movement awakened Nativist sentiment during the mid 2010s, and yet there have been a number of ideological debates within the broader coalition. MAGA was, and is, dominated by libertarian politics, which can be seen in

the likes of Shapiro and many amongst the TPUSA crowd. However, a growing dissident coalition amongst the Right, the America First movement, emphasise white, christian, pan-western/european nationalism, with a social conservatism and center-left/national socialist economics. This is signified by the likes of Fuentes, and other dissidents who are growing increasingly against the current Trump administration, such as Tucker Carlson and Candace Owens.

However, it is now clear that Shapiro's popularity has tanked, and has lost favour amongst many of the Right - Fuentes seems to have come out on top. However, the direction of this movement is uncertain. For one, Fuentes, being an incredibly divisive and controversial figure, even for those on the right, may be unable to lead a popular right-wing movement. For another, word is coming out that the new dissident faction headed by Carlson and co is looking to seize power of the republican party for the Evangelical Zionist class dominating it currently. However, many of these figures, including Carlson, may in fact have ties to certain intelligence services, such as the CIA or FBI. Many of them, in fact, supported Israel, until the events of the past few years, which seems to many to indicate that they are a controlled opposition. There may be attempts to channel dissidence down "safe avenues", within the Overton window, which maintains the power/status quo of the current establishment. (See https://open.substack.com/pub/politicaconomist/p/tucker-carlsons-deceptive-cia-persecution?utm_source=share&utm_medium=android&r=2x9vt5). This may also be to shift blame away from the United States and onto Israel, which is, in fact, part of the US empire in the middle east.

In other words, we can see how Globalism is creating or sowing the seeds/tools of its own destruction - the very tools which sustain it. In fact, if we understand globalism to be a consequence of modernity(/modern industrial capitalism), we may thus understand this as part of the broader capitalist structure sowing the seeds of the destruction of the institutions it facilitates. On the other hand, we may understand that communism or leftist-adjacent ideologies may not necessarily disagree with globalism or "internationalism", they simply disagree with their capitalist counterparts in regards to how it should be organised and achieved/maintained.

In any case, we see how (at the very least) our current political settlement is under threat. At least in the western nations, the liberal centre, the consensus order is breaking down in real time. Thus, this may signify the coming of a new era of history. Only time will tell how this new political settlement, how this new era of history shall play out now...

Virtuous Individuals, Decadence and Division in the Quran:

“If only there had been among the ‘destroyed’ peoples before you, ‘O believers,’ virtuous individuals who forbade corruption in the land—other than the few We had saved ‘from the torment’. But the wrongdoers ‘only’ pursued their ‘worldly’ pleasures, becoming wicked. And your Lord ‘O Prophet’ would never destroy a society unjustly while its people were acting rightly. Had your Lord so willed, He would have certainly made humanity one single community ‘of believers’, but they will always ‘choose to’ differ— except those shown mercy by your Lord—and so He created them ‘to choose freely’. And so the Word of your Lord will be fulfilled: “I will surely fill up Hell with jinn and humans all together.” “ (Quran 11:116-9).

There are a number of points to be derived here:

“...virtuous individuals who forbade corruption in the land...” demonstrates an emphasis on (principled) individualism, expounding upon the value of the individual in and of himself in contrast to being part of the collective providing their value. As such, the individual should not merely be subsumed into the collective, with no regard for morality or truth.

It is thus the case of virtuous, courageous individuals being contrarians, standing up to the decadence of the collective. They are either right or wrong, regardless of what the outside world says. It is thus that truth is not merely defined by what the collective says it is. As Nietzsche says: “In individuals, insanity is rare; but in groups, parties, nations and epochs, it is the rule.”

This is further explained by the Quranic “Reverse-Cave” Allegory (in contrast to Plato’s Cave Allegory), where the cave acts as a symbol of refuge, of retreat to the edges of society when the outside world goes insane, goes mad. Thus, by this retreat, one can retain and reflect upon the truth, on the nature of reality itself. Thus, when the outside society conforms to standards which shy away from some truth they ignore, in favour of comfortable lies, and refuse to listen to, and in fact, persecute, those who act as contrarians to these presuppositions, one must retreat to the fringes of society, reorganise, and maintain and retain the validity of their claims to some kind of truth.

“ ‘Remember’ when those youths took refuge in the cave, and said, “Our Lord! Grant us mercy from Yourself and guide us rightly through our ordeal”... And We strengthened their hearts when they stood up and declared, “Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. We will never call upon any god besides Him, or we would truly be uttering an outrageous lie.” ‘Then they said to one another,’ “These people of ours have taken gods besides Him. Why do they not produce a clear proof of them? Who then does more wrong than those who fabricate lies against Allah? Since you have distanced yourselves from them and what they worship besides Allah, take refuge in the cave. Your Lord will extend His mercy to you and accommodate you in your ordeal.” “ (Quran 18:10-16).

Thus, the few may be more cohesive and upright than with the collective whole. When the society, the outside world succumbs to insanity, strategic retreat and reorganisation on the edges and fringes of society becomes necessary. Mob mentality/Groupthink are not virtues,

neither is dogmatism, blind following, and mere conformity for its own sake. Challenging these societal norms, or the status quo so to speak, is important. You will not be saved by following the opinions of the many for their own sake - one has the moral agency, and thus responsibility, for the use of one's rational faculties, and spiritual/moral faculties - in particular, when the society grows stagnant, and decadent, and clings to comfortable lies.

"But the wrongdoers 'only' pursued their 'worldly' pleasures, becoming wicked."

This relates to when a society or civilisation enters upon its era of decadence and decline. In the pursuit of pleasures and animalistic desires in an unfettered manner, it creates the conditions of comfort and instant gratification. Thus, a decadent people become disconnected from the struggles of their forefathers, and lose the prerequisite mobilising force to establish and maintain civilization (or i may also refer to the Khaldunian term *asabiyyah*). When this fundamental restraint is compromised, then so too are the moral faculties, thus leading to habits based upon instant gratification. This instant gratification in certain moral matters (such as sexual), then extends into greed, lust for power, corruption, etc.

Is it any wonder that the Epstein class is arguably the most powerful/wealthy in all of human history. A corrupt, stingy class who built its wealth on the backs of the masses is also sexually depraved and immoral/degenerates.

"And your Lord 'O Prophet' would never destroy a society unjustly while its people were acting rightly."

In other words, a society which maintains moral uprightness, also maintains the necessary social cohesion and high trust conditions of a civilisation to be maintained and function. This uprightness extends across the board, as moral restraint is linked to some kind of pre-requisite future-time orientation and delayed gratification, which itself is furthermore pre-requisite for civilisation building and maintaining.

The destruction and decline of a society/civilisation befalls a decadent society, not during its initial civilisation building phase, with clear social norms and moral boundaries.

The Divine Will in relation to his plan regarding human creation: "Had your Lord so willed, He would have certainly made humanity one single community 'of believers', but they will always 'choose to' differ— except those shown mercy by your Lord—and so He created them 'to choose freely'."

Thus, diversity is an inherent aspect of the human condition. This may be a beautiful thing - "O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may 'get to' know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware." (Quran 49:13).

And yet, it is also the source of much conflict and strife - an unfortunate, yet inherent and inevitable part of our condition. Humanity may be one in essence, yet different sub-groups within humanity have their fundamental conflicts, those conflicts being grounded in the

context of history and identity - thus, it is difficult for most to break out of the context, being context-based and context-bound. Being based in this context, they actively choose to then engage in it.

This doesn't necessitate that we are merely passive puppets, but rather many, many individuals who actively shape and participate in these conflicts. It also reflects this kind of degree of mystery to existence - humanity, based on its fallible, limited nature, not being able to know and understand everything, will not be absolutely certain of the basis upon which it engages in these conflicts. Indeed, their exact nature, or the reality of the history behind it, or the truth of its roots and origins altogether, may at least partially remain a mystery - unknowable to mankind.

"Even if there were only two people left they would still fight among themselves" (Erwin Smith quote from AOT). Humanity by its very nature is bound to fight and argue, from the smallest of details to the largest of them – "But, man is ever more quarrelsome than anything." (Quran 18:54).

We thus may only know of certain approximations to the truth. We may be unsure of the whole of any given reality as it is. And yet, that is part of the great mystery that we must attempt to solve - indeed, this sense of mystery is embedded into our very existence. This is reflected in the following verse of the Quran - " 'Remember' when your Lord said to the angels, "I am going to place a successive 'human' authority on earth." They asked 'Allah', "Will You place in it someone who will spread corruption there and shed blood while we glorify Your praises and proclaim Your holiness?" Allah responded, "I know what you do not know." (Quran 2:30). Thus, the nature of man, which is embedded within it, simultaneously, conflict and order, is part of a kind of Divine Wisdom, not completely comprehensible to creation.

Those of a more secular or agnostic or atheistic orientation may simply understand this as declaring deeper underlying realities regarding human existence that are subconsciously understood across time and place. Even if taken metaphorically, there is still great benefit to be taken here. In any case, humankind may seem quite paradoxical, where throughout the course of its existence, these simultaneous qualities of conflict, peace, order and division, are constant within our condition. Thus, we ought to understand these, not only through the lens of "Tragedy and Hope" (to use Dr Carroll Quigley's phrase), but to fundamentally understand it through the lens of the "Human, All Too Human" (to use Nietzsche's phrase).

Pan-Civilisational Unity and False Dialectics

I have noticed recent trends of the awakening of “Civilisational Consciousness” and “Era Consciousness” amongst certain political sections of the internet, with an awareness of our era of history and the possible end of our current political settlement/the coming of a new one. There is an awakening of pan-civilisational identity, and identifying with a broader tradition and cultural heritage. For example, the rise of pan-western/European sentiment amongst many of the Western Right.

In the context of the Muslim world, the concept of the Ummah (Islamic Nation) provides this source of pan-civilisational identity, and is key in promoting solidarity between muslims and their struggles across the world. It provides a sense of brotherhood that cuts across ethnic, cultural, and even sectarian boundaries. Of course, this does not mean that ethnic and sectarian divisions, tensions and conflicts don't exist, but rather this identity shared between different groups of people can provide this sense of unity.

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "You see the believers as regards their being merciful among themselves and showing love among themselves and being kind, resembling one body, so that, if any part of the body is not well then the whole body shares the sleeplessness (insomnia) and fever with it." (<https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6011>). This is, at least the theoretical/theological, brotherhood and unity that Muslims should share.

This of course brings up the recent events of the Iran-US war, involving Israel, Lebanon, and the Gulf states as well. Of course, my standard position has been that we are with the Iranian peoples and their rightful struggles, whether it be their right to resist tyranny and oppression by their own government, or whether it be their right to national self-determination against foreign interventionism and neo-imperialism. Thus, we are against the war on Iran, which is an expression of Western neo-imperialism, and against the crimes of the Iranian government/regime against its own people.

It is thus not as simple as “Western Imperialism vs Anti-Imperialism”, or “They hate our freedoms/liberties”. Indeed, these false dialectics that are often created are further played into to facilitate these conflicts. It is, most unfortunately, the common people who suffer. In fact, it's within the interest of the governments involved to perpetuate these false dialectics so as to play into these conflicts. There is considerable nuance in every situation, of course. When we look at the history of Iran, we see the Ayatollah, Shah, Democratic governments, as well as imperialist influences before that.

We have to, in all these cases, think along civilisational lines. We can take the position of critical support, acknowledging the complexity of each and every situation. We must think beyond Sunni-Shia or Arab-Persian lines, beyond petty nationalism or sectarianism - along Pan-Ummah, Pan-Islamic terms. This doesn't mean we downplay the historic crimes of different governments or regimes across the muslim world, whether it be Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, the Gulf states, etc. The example of Saudi Arabia is particularly interesting, It exposes a lot of hypocrisy on the behalf of some. It has historical crimes, and human rights

violations as well, with support for militant extremist groups. Yet due to strategic interests, the United States cosies up to them.

Nevertheless, we should support these nations against imperialism and foreign interventionism, whilst also striving for change and, if needed, revolution from within. It has to be an organic process within the context of the societies involved. Syria is an interesting case study, because it defies and breaks down a lot of the neat binaries, dichotomies or categories people try to put political events into. The lines between secular and religious, imperialist and anti-imperialist, are quite significantly blurred.

When it comes to the Shias, we quickly realise that for them, they pride themselves in viewing themselves as the underdog, resisting against all odds. This goes back to the story of Karbala, where the grandson of the Prophet (peace be upon him), Hussain, alongside over 70 members of the family's prophet, were martyred by the Umayyad army. "But those who were certain that they would meet Allāh said, "How many a small company has overcome a large company by permission of Allāh. And Allāh is with the patient." (Quran 2:249).

The shias seem to have a unique spiritual power, both on an individual and collective level. If anybody has seen their latmias, they will know what I am talking about. Now, of course, as a sunni, I do not agree with much of what they believe in or practise. And yet, I can not help but have a sense of respect for people who have such profound adherence to and belief in their cause. The least that can be said about the shias is that many of them are willing to die by the principles they live by. And that is to put many Sunnis, including myself, to shame.

The fact is, we have abandoned the responsibility that we have to our communities and nations in securing their freedom and autonomy from foreign interventionism. The Iranian Government is oppressive (which can't be understated), but the question that arises is as to whether the Sunni governments/governments of Sunni majority nations are any better? And whether or not they have done anything meaningful to resist Western Interventionism in the Muslim World?

In any case what we need is unity that cuts across sectarian lines, no more brother wars between Arabs or Persians or between Sunnis and Shias. At the same time this does not mean that we justify state tyranny or condone oppression or an oppressive government - indeed we should actively oppose them.

This also brings me onto the point regarding false dialectics. Some people put the blame on the United States or Israel or Western colonialism, some people put the blame on Iran or China or Russia (the supposed anti-imperialist bloc). Some people may put the blame on Fundamentalists or indeed Religious groups as a whole. Or some may put the blame on Secular Ideological groups. In reality, it is not one of these but all of these that have engaged in oppression that have engaged in tyranny and all are culpable and liable for being held to account for their oppression.

An example that we can give is in the case of Israel. The ongoing crimes against humanity and genocide against the Palestinian peoples is well known. But what some people may not acknowledge is how Israel, and by extension, the United States, funds certain

Fundamentalist or extremist or islamist groups or how they have infiltrated these groups and use them to advantage their own ends by playing into these false dialectics.

The logic is simple - these colonial or settler-colonial entities can use the (without a doubt) immoral and illegitimate actions of these groups to legitimize their acts of tyranny - it thus creates a cycle where each one of them feeds of the others actions - the extremists play into the actions of the imperialists and the actions of the imperialists plays into the actions of the extremists.

Unfortunately in the case of Palestine, in the case of the groups representing the Palestinian cause, whether it be the secular leftist or secular nationalist movements such as the PLO. Or whether it be the islamist factions such as Hamas at times. Palestinian resistance is justified, yet they will do things or they will commit atrocities such as October the 7th, which will give legitimacy to Israel to carry out its actions of genocide, thus Israel can take some of the atrocities committed by these groups and run with them in order to justify its genocidal actions and thus continually push this false dialectic to push its subsequent narrative.

Indeed context is important here - this is not symmetrical per se, but without a doubt the suffering of Innocent civilians regardless of who they are or from where they are, is a tragedy, and playing into these false dialectics ensures the suffering of innocent people from pretty much any area of the world or from any background.

Unfortunately an uncanny habit of people, regardless of what group they belong to, is to be sympathetic to the extremists of their own camp. This is, of course, based within the context of these conflicts in so far as they are acceptable as long as they are on our side. Or, at least, the extremists of our own camp are more acceptable to us than those from the other.

This is true across religious, sectarian, cultural, ethnic and civilizational lines, etc etc. This is true for Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Christians etc. This is true for European peoples, Asians, Middle Easterners, Africans, etc etc. This is true for Nationalists, Leftists Theocrats, etc etc. In reality, this does not help honest discourse or seeking truth, neither does it necessarily help on a political or social level. In fact, it ends up damaging these movements, by detracting away from the broader spirit of these movements.

Again, contextualisation, humanisation, and understanding are important, but that does not mean that we justify and legitimate these acts. Indeed we are opposed to acts of oppression, or acts of tyranny, and we absolutely must condemn them.

Thus, we must ensure a society where people are granted their “god-given rights and responsibilities”, so to speak. It doesn't have to be a fundamentalist society, or an extremist one, but neither does it have to be one which is under the thumb of foreign interventionist imperialist powers. It can respect modern sensibilities, but still maintain its own unique civilizational identity and traditions.

Insofar as Islam, at least in terms of certain teachings, is a universalist Faith, it cuts across sectarian/ethnic/cultural lines. We can even talk in terms of a kind of Islamic heritage (التراث الإسلامي).

This also brings us onto the subject of organized religion and critiques of it. Indeed, I have discussed some of these in the past. Some of these arguments have their validity and merit to them. For example, how it can lead to dogmatism, blind following, and this kind of rigidity and ritualism that limits genuine liberty. At the same time, the complete opposite, which is a kind of militant secularism or atheism, that rejects all religion or tradition as mere superstition, may in fact form a dogmatism of its own.

Thus, a balance may be important. An emphasis on God, spirituality, and on certain spiritual and religious teachings, without falling into this kind of dogmatism, rigidity, or mob mentality. Most importantly, we must keep the spirit, not the letter, at the heart of our actions.

When it comes to the question of different Civilizations, such as the West, then on a fundamental level, we can respect their good contributions to the world and appreciate the incredible intellectual strides that they have made. As is apparent from my work on my Substack and on YouTube, I study both the Western and Islamic “traditions”. I have come to develop a love and appreciation and respect for them.

Obviously, we will naturally disagree with them on many things but we can still benefit and learn from them. Ultimately, we will be opposed to Western interventionism in the broader Muslim world, or anywhere else for that matter. The same standard can be set for every other civilization whether it be the Chinese, the Russians, the Africans or the Indians.

Ultimately, Islam is a universalist religion, even if one would level the critique of Islam playing into a certain nationalist or imperialist narratives, which I have discussed in the past. And in its core essence, various Islamic teachings are universalist in nature, and there is an emphasis on a transnational global Brotherhood, which transcends ethnic, cultural, sectarian and even civilizational barriers.

As the Quran asserts that “we have created you as tribes and Nations so that you may get to know one another”. We see the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him having said that, “there is no superiority of a non-Arab over an Arab, nor of an Arab over a non-Arab. There is no superiority of a black man over a white man, nor of a white man over a black man...”.

Ultimately, the Islamic faith can be the rallying principle, behind which we can reorganise this current civilization, in an age of crisis and conflict.

As the great poet of the east, Dr Muhammad Iqbal said:

If you are loyal to the Prophet Muhammad, then we are yours.
What is this world, the Divine Pen and Tablet are yours.

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“I am a slave to freedom”

The downsides of ideology, narrative, and conviction in AOT

“We humans, we are all the same. Every last one of us. For some it's drinking, for some it's women. For some, even religion. Family. The King. Dreams. Children. Power. All of us had to spend our lives drunk on something. Else we'd have no cause to keep pushing on. Everyone was a slave to something.” - Kenny Ackerman, AOT

What is it that drives man? Is it his active agency? Perhaps some kind of will? Is he a slave to this will to live, to find meaning, even power? Is he bound by his context, incapable of escaping the mental and physical prisons built around his mind, body and soul? Or is he truly free? Is it possible, or even desirable, for him to be so “free”? Is man destined for liberty, or is he condemned to be so?

Are we free? Do we truly want to be so? If we knew the costs to attain it, would you still want to?

Conviction and purpose are incredibly powerful things. They drive many to incredible and historical feats. And, yet, they are often treated as absolutes, unquestionable tenets to be adhered to, and to be seen through their logical conclusion. In the course of these certainties, much damage is caused in the wake of attaining them.

You thus see the irony of what may happen. At times, our conviction gives us the power to challenge the falsehood, the decadence, the glorified ignorance and injustices of the current system or society. One may lament that the masses are “sheep”, who are mere conformists, closing their eyes to all that is wrong.

And yet, ironically, they are, by virtue of their own conviction, in attaining another ideal or system or philosophy, slaves to what pushes them forward. They may see it through “to its bitter end”, pushing it to its logical conclusion, so as to complete the attainment of this ideal.

Ironically, Eren, in his constant pursuit of freedom, became the greatest slave of all. For he became bound, by his constant, endless striving towards this principle, this ideal, inevitably unable to break the cycle of hate, for Paradis would eventually be destroyed (though long after his death, the least that can be said is that he bought time for Paradis to develop and thrive for at least 1-2 centuries (I would guess)).

In a twist of irony, attaining this liberty would come at the cost of depriving 80% of humanity, not just of liberty, but of life itself. In the course of self-determination and independence for the Eldian, the rest of the world was deprived of such. Although sworn to protect humanity from the titans, he wiped out most of humanity with the very titan powers, about which he exclaimed “I will wipe them off the face of the Earth.”

Thus, in a twist of fate, the freedom he sought after became the greatest slavery of all, compelling him to commit atrocity after atrocity. He comes to this stark realisation at the end - "I am a slave to freedom".

And that really does explain a lot. Oftentimes, it is what we pursue that compromises the pursuit. Or, to put it inversely, the pursuit, paradoxically, inhibits and prevents us from what we pursue.

It may be that contemporary society is most guilty, not of literal, but of spiritual, and mental, slavery. We may be slaves to hedonism, to consumption, even to our own selves. Some may worship money, looks, and status, despite becoming lost in pursuit of what is temporal and perishing, ignoring that these are merely means to an end, not the end goal itself.

"Say: "Shall we tell you of those who lose most in respect of their deeds?- [They are] those whose effort is lost in worldly life, while they think that they are doing well in work." (Quran 18:103-4).

Ironically, the ideologies or philosophies we adhere to, the systems and narratives we construct, all end up playing or fulfilling this role. This may be a kind of "law of unintended consequences." Thus, ideologies purporting to support the case of liberty may only sustain the illusion of liberty, and in fact deprive many of said "liberty". Ideologies purporting equality may in fact create conditions of immense inequality.

Narratives which purport to be in opposition to one thing or another may owe something to that thing, more than it would openly admit to. The supposed objective "History" of an event is thus claimed by the adherents of multiple different narratives, all with vying, conflicting claims to the truth of the matter.

Theology or Spirituality - rigid, extreme, doctrinaire thought, which may merely become a smokescreen for one's ego, arrogance or zealotry, thus denying a person from genuinely reaching truth, or the Divine. Philosophy, whereby one engages in rationalizations, to compensate for what one doesn't have, or lacks rather.

This is not to tell you not to pursue anything, or to stop engaging in any of the above. Rather, it is not to let your pursuit be compromised in search of what you attain - do not let your pursued after thing become a paradox and an irony, rather than a reality.

Most of all, as Nietzsche would say:

"He who fights with monsters might take care lest he thereby become a monster. And if you gaze for long into an abyss, the abyss gazes into you."

The Fracturing Of Legacy

How the death of great individuals leads to division, schism and conflict

There are great individuals - individuals who shape entire eras of History. These great individuals often have that natural gravitas and charisma around which a great mass of people can unify. They are the personification of a philosophy, a worldview, or a system. Most of all, they are the personification, of a conviction, of a purpose. A kind of “Will to Power”, around which people can mobilise.

Yet oftentimes, the legacy of a great individual, or even of a great group of peoples, is fractured after their death or passing. This is one of the great ironies of history - with the passage of time, and the passing of these great individuals, that unifying persona is fractured into many different parts, which is inherited by different inheritors, who may inherit a part of that legacy, but not the whole.

The different legacies, or aspects of these legacies, that are inherited, can compound over time, giving rise to new legacies or sub-legacies within the broader legacy. This can be both on the intellectual level but also on the socio-political level. We can see many examples of this.

For example, Alexander the Great was a great leader and philosopher, yet his empire fractured after his death. Qin Shi Huang, despite being a despot and tyrant, was a great leader who managed to reunify China, yet his dynasty fell shortly after his death. Interestingly, there seems to be a consistent pattern throughout Chinese history, that of “just rulers” at the beginning of a dynasty, only for them to gradually succumb to tyranny and despotism. Thus, there had been a constant cycle of disintegration and reunification.

We also see the legacy of the classical civilisation (the Greco-Roman, so to speak), being inherited by the West, Orthodox, and Islamic civilisations. Interestingly, the Muslim world may also have inherited a partial legacy from the Persian Civilisation, although it is also much broader and older than the Islamic one. We can also discuss the development of a distinctive Persian Islamic identity as well. We could also argue that the Muslims in India are inheritors of both an Indian and Islamic heritage, hence are distinctively Indian Muslims, with a distinct Indo-Islamic identity and history.

We can also see this playing out within the Islamic context. We see the fracturing, or “schisms” that occurred within the Muslim community after the passing of the Prophet. Indeed, the Prophet combined within him many different roles, that of leader, general, teacher, etc. One aspect of this is the knowledge that the Prophet taught, typically being understood in Orthodox circles as being the teachings of the Prophet in the Hadith Corpus, representing the Sunnah (Prophetic Way/Methodology). As per certain hadiths, the inheritors of the Prophets are the Scholars. In other words, the inheritance passed down from the Prophets is this knowledge. But there have been those who questioned or outright rejected the authority of the Sunnah, or at least that it has been authentically preserved.

Thus, we may have the Quranists, who only follow the Quran. Even amongst Sunnis, there have been the classical and traditional debates about the status of the Sunnah, as an authority or in relation to the Quran. There have also been discussions regarding the role of reason and revelation. Others, such as the Shias, may also believe in the authority of their Imams, and have compiled their sayings into their collections as well. Besides the theological conflicts, there have naturally been the political ones as well.

All of this is to say that the lack of a unifying figure to return back to was a fundamental reason for these schisms to take place, as there was no unifying figure who could present a resolution in case of dispute, which may lead to conflict. The ministry of Prophet hood, as per the Semitic pattern, contains many different dimensions. These include the sociopolitical, the spiritual, the intellectual, and even more. Naturally, however, the Companions of the Prophet did not combine within themselves all of these characteristics - indeed they embodied many different archetypes.

Some were warriors, some scholars, some leaders, some businessmen, some ascetics or mystics, etc. We see how the civil strife that occurred at the end of the Rashidun Caliphate shifted Muslim rule towards Kingdom and kingship. Whereas the first represented a model for leadership “upon the Prophetic methodology” (as per traditional Sunni narratives), this gradually unravelled, seeing the fracturing of this legacy, as leadership shifted towards dynastic rule.

In other words, schism and sectarianism, and civil strife and conflict, are part of this “fracturing of legacy”. During the prophet's lifetime, the Quran had declared - “Then if you dispute something, then return back to God and his Messenger.” But when the Messenger had passed, within whom rests that authority to resolve disputes? Could you get people to unite around said authority? And could it act as a unifying figure/principle?

Sectarianism arises in many cases over disputes as to which religious authority to follow, the nature of the authority, or over the lack of a unifying authority, thus lack of unifying interpretation. It raises various questions as to what one should follow.

Should one follow some kind of tradition as a mechanism for interpretation, or take a kind of Protestant Sola Scriptura approach? Should one take an esoteric or esoteric interpretation? Should one take a literal, symbolic, or metaphorical interpretation? A scriptural or extra-scriptural interpretation? Are the full depths of their meanings already revealed, or will they gradually be realised over the course of time with the discovery of new knowledge?

There are almost an infinite amount of interpretations or perspectives of a “tradition”, or “system of thought”, or of an “intellectual development”, one can take, yet the unifying presence of a great individual can settle such disputes. Without such a great individual, such legacy is fractured, leaving it to be interpreted and understood/acted upon differently.

